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THE BOY-SPY DETECTIVE ON DUTY.

Plucky Dan;

THE BOY SPY-DETECTIVE;

OR,

A GREENHORN ON GUARD.

The Story of What a Foundling Found.

BY NED ST. MEYER.

CHAPTER I.

DAN OVERHEARS A PLOT.

"It's a bold undertaking."

"I admit it."

"And we may get caught."

"True."

"And sent to the State Prison."

"If caught—yes. But, you mustn't expect to bag a ten thousand dollar swag without running some risk."

Dan Dart listened to these words with profound surprise. He was a new-comer to New York, and had just dropped into a restaurant for something to eat.

The conversation which he had overheard had been carried on by two men who occupied the table next to his own—the tables being separated by a small blind partition, making little apartments for the customers.

One of these men was, apparently, fifty years of age—tall and rather morose-looking—not of prepossessing appearance, certainly.

The other man, evidently, was much younger, and, in dress, somewhat of a dude.

Both were so interested in the subject under discussion as not to heed the danger of being overheard by any customer beyond the screen, and almost holding his breath the boy waited for them to continue.

"Maybe it's not ten thousand dollars' worth," continued the younger man, "and maybe it's more. Old Shepland has a pile of stuff, and you know musical instruments count up fast, especially precious old violins of which he has a dozen or more."

"Yes; but—"

"Oh, come, Brooks, don't—"

"Shut up! Why do you always drag my name in? Don't say Brooks again!"

"Sure enough; I forgot," returned the elder man. "But, remember, we mustn't lose time. It is quick work now for big profits or give the job up."

"Rather take time than make a botch of it, Nick," warned the other.

"Now who is calling names?"

"Did I mention your right name? Not much I didn't! You well know I don't give away a pard, in that way."

"Well, this place is too public, anyway. Let us take a walk and do our talking as we tramp. No one can hear us then."

The two arose, and, stepping to the cashier's desk, settled their check. Then they quit the restaurant, but not before the country lad had taken a sharp look at each, so as to be sure of his men if he followed.

"Something's up," declared the boy to himself—"something bad, too. I shouldn't be surprised if it was robbery. Yes, it is that, sure, and nothing else. Wonder if I ought to tell the police? Can it be possible that the Shepland they mentioned is the same gentleman I am going to see? It is not a common name, so it may be my old friend."

Dan Dart was a foundling. About fifteen years previous, when a mere baby, he had been found in the snow, on one of the mountain roads near Grayville.

The one to discover and save him was Enos Masson, the village blacksmith. Father Masson, as he was called, was an old bachelor, but he had taken the foundling in and cared for him until the boy was ten years of age.

Then the worthy blacksmith died, leaving not a cent behind, and for five years the luckless Dan knocked around the village, earning barely enough to keep body and soul together.

One night, while returning from a moonlight hunt, Dan heard cries for help, and, rushing up, was astonished to find two men trying to rob a stout gentleman of his small valise.

Dan was a strong boy, and of brave spirit, and jumping in he hit one of the men over the head with his gun and instantly covered the other with the weapon.

Both of the astonished villains got out of range and sight as quickly as possible, and the stout gentleman grasped the boy's hand warmly.

"Well done!" he exclaimed. "What is your name, my boy?"

"Daniel Dart, sir."

"Live around here?"

"Yes, sir—all around."

"All around? What do you mean?"

"Anywhere that I get a chance for work. I haven't any regular home now."

The gentleman became interested, and made the homeless lad tell his story.

"It's tough luck," he said, at the conclusion. "But you've done me a great service, and I want to reward you. Here is a twenty-dollar bill. Accept it with my thanks. I've got five thousand dollars in this valise, but it's all sealed up and isn't mine."

"But I don't deserve—"

"A boy like you deserves all he can get. But I've got to hurry to catch the train to New York. Here is my card. If you ever come to the city call on me, and maybe I'll be able to do something for you."

And in a moment the stranger was hurrying to the railroad station as fast as his heavy form would permit.

Dan had looked at the card. It read:

"FREDERIC SHEPLAND,

Importer of Musical Instruments.

Maiden Lane, New York."

"He's a true gentleman," were the boy's words. "Hope I'll meet him again."

Two months later, the homeless boy tired of Grayville, and, packing his few belongings in a "grip," he started out to seek his fortune in the great metropolis.

"Can't be any worse than it is in Grayville," he had decided. "Get more kicks than cake here every day in the week, and not a person in all this region who would pay a dime to bury me."

It was afternoon when he arrived in the great, noisy, teeming, swarming metropolis with the meager sum of three dollars in his pocket, his entire capital.

Feeling hungry he had determined to eat before starting to find Mr. Shepland's place of business, the first point to which he had decided to proceed.

He did not know much about restaurants, and so dropped into the first at hand, and had nearly finished his modest meal when the conversation narrated came to his hearing.

Hastily finishing he walked up to the desk.

"Do you know the two men who just left?" he asked the cashier, as he paid the amount of his check.

"No."

"I thought, perhaps, I might know one of them," continued Dan, apologetically.

"They've been coming here regularly every day for a week," went on the man behind the desk.

"And you don't know them?"

"I think one of them is called Brooks."

"And the other?"

"I don't know. Why don't you go after them?"

"Guess I will," returned Dan, and he left.

The two men were no longer in sight, but the country lad had no intention of following them. He thought it best to call on his friend Mr. Shepland at once.

"Perhaps he's not the Shepland, but, if he isn't, he'll certainly advise me what's best to do."

On inquiring he learned that Maiden Lane was fully a mile from the restaurant, and not wishing to lose time he jumped aboard a horse-car and took a seat.

What was his astonishment a moment later, to learn that he had seated himself next to the dandily-looking young man called Brooks!

"Here's a go!" thought Dan. "I think I'll try to find out something about this promoter!"

Dan was neatly dressed, and as one of the few friends he had left in Grayville had given him a new collar and a neat tie, he looked quite respectable.

"Warm day," he remarked, politely.

"Yes, it is, and dusty, too," replied the young man, good-naturedly.

"It is worse in the country," averred Dan.

"Come from the country?"

"Yes; this is my first trip to New York."

"You'll find it a lively place."

"I suppose so. Are you acquainted here?"

Dan asked the question innocently. The young man laughed.

"Bet I am! Know every nook and corner in the town," he replied.

"Then maybe you can direct me to a good

boarding-house?" went on the incipient detective, bound to keep the conversation going.

"Certainly. Guess my landlady wouldn't object to another boarder."

"Where do you board?"

"At Mrs. Smart's, on Waverley Place. She gives good board, and don't make you think a pile-driver had struck your pocket-book when she talks terms."

"Thank you for your information, Mr. —"

"My name is Brooks—F. Carter Brooks. And yours?"

"Dan Dart. I come from Grayville."

"All right, Daniel. Come up and see Mrs. Smart. It's a good house, and we're all friendly there."

"I will," the boy replied.

The young man stepped from the car and hurried down a side street.

"A smart-looking boy," he said, to himself. "From the country, and therefore green. Hope he comes up. Perhaps Nick and I can use him."

"Not a bad fellow in his talk," Dan reflected, as he rode along. "But they say Satan has a smoother tongue than any parson, and Mrs. Smart and Mister Brooks may be on intimate terms of friendship; so I guess I'll investigate."

In a few minutes Maiden Lane was reached, and, alighting, Dan walked down to Mr. Shepland's establishment.

The country boy was astonished at the size of the place. He had expected to see something big, but nothing as immense as this.

"Mr. Shepland must certainly be a very rich man," he thought; and he was right.

Entering the ground floor of the premises, he advanced to where a clerk was busy writing.

"I would like to see Mr. Shepland," he said.

"Mr. Shepland is very busy now," was the reply. "What is it you wish?"

"Wish to see him," was Dan's answer. "In fact, I must see him."

The clerk stared at the caller.

"He is very busy," he repeated.

"Then I'll wait."

"He may not be at leisure for an hour or two."

"Can't help it; I'll wait anyhow."

"May I ask your name?"

"Dan Dart."

"I'll send it in."

"Do. Tell him I called on private business."

The clerk eyed Dan curiously. Then he disappeared into an inner office.

"Mr. Shepland will see you in a few moments," he announced, when he reappeared.

"All right," and Dan seemed at his ease.

Presently an elderly gentleman stepped from the inner office and left by the street door.

"You can go in now," said the clerk to Dan.

A moment later Dan was inside of Mr. Shepland's private office.

CHAPTER II.

DAN OBTAINS STRANGE EMPLOYMENT.

MR. SHEPLAND'S private apartment was a handsome and comfortable one. The desks were of the roller-top variety, the chairs richly upholstered, and the walls beautifully papered and hung with fine engravings.

In one corner stood a massive safe, the open door of which revealed well-filled compartments, which contents Dan was certain must be valuable.

Mr. Shepland arose as the boy entered. He looked even stouter than before, and turned a benignant face upon the lad.

"Well, well, my young friend!" he exclaimed.

"Glad to see you. Come to town on a visit?"

"No, sir; I've come to try my luck," replied Dan, promptly and confidently.

"Try your luck, eh? It's a hard job here, as you will find, I fear."

"It can't be harder here than it is in Grayville—I'm sure of that, sir."

"Humph! I don't know about that. What do you expect to do, my lad?"

"Anything I can get that pays and is honest. Work agrees with me."

"Got a trade?"

"I used to help my father, or rather the man who took care of me, at the forge. I worked the bellows, but I didn't much fancy that trade. It's too dirty and hum-drummy. I'd like to get into some store or office."

"I believe you told me once that you was a foundling."

"Yes, sir," sadly—"a boy without a name."

"Ever find out anything about yourself?"

"Never a word, sir!"

Mr. Shepland sat silent for a moment. Something like a tear stood in his eye and he heaved an audible sigh, as if some painful remembrance of the past was brought to mind.

"You never expect to either, I suppose," he remarked.

"Not likely. Father Masson tried hard to discover some clew, but it was no use. I'm only Dan Dart, the foundling, and no one else, much to my sorrow."

"How would you like to enter my employ?"

"First-rate, sir. I'm sure I could please you."

"It's hard work."

"I won't mind that."

"And the pay is small."

"Is it enough to live on, decently?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then I'll be glad to take it."

"But, you might do better, my boy. I don't really need help, and so cannot afford to pay as much as you might earn elsewhere. I can give you seven dollars a week, at present—that is all."

Seven dollars a week!

Dan's heart gave a jump.

"Seven dollars!" he exclaimed. "Oh, thank you, Mr. Shepland! It's more than I hoped to start on. Why, I've only got three dollars in my pocket now, and seven coming in every week will seem a mint of money to me, sir!"

The rich importer smiled.

"Hardly. But next week I may make a change in the stock-room, and then I'll put you there, and you'll be advanced rapidly if you prove worthy of it. Do you want to go to work now?"

"Yes, sir; the sooner the better. But I've got some private business with you before I go."

Mr. Shepland looked surprised.

"What is it?"

Word for word Dan repeated the conversation he had overheard in the restaurant.

The importer listened attentively, and that he was considerably perplexed was evident.

"Brooks is in my employ," he said. "But he has grown so careless that I have been thinking of discharging him—the change I just spoke about. Come with me. I want to be sure that the man you met in the restaurant and my clerk are one and the same person."

Mr. Shepland led the way out of his private office into a side hallway, and then through a labyrinth of boxes and stock to the rear of the building.

"Don't let the clerks see you," he whispered. "But tell me if you see the man you met in the eating-house."

Dan gazed carefully around.

"There he is!" he returned, as the dudish-looking young man came along, carrying several violins in his arms.

"Sure? Don't make a mistake, now, for it may be a serious matter."

"Positive, sir," replied the boy, confidently.

Without further words the importer led the way back to his office.

He was much disturbed, and looked at the foundling boy inquiringly.

"I know I can trust you," he finally said.

"I haven't forgotten what you did for me several months ago, and your warning to me now is only another evidence of your honesty and good will. Can you keep a secret, Daniel?"

"Just try me and see," returned the lad, quickly.

"I want to tell you because you may be of service in this matter. A boy can often go unnoticed where a man cannot."

"You want me to play spy?"

"Yes, but only in the cause of honesty and justice."

"Then I'll take the job. But maybe you understand what I overheard better than I do myself," Dan suggested.

"A little better, but not much. Weeks ago I noticed that there were mistakes in Brooks's accounts, and now I am sure that he is robbing me."

"But, how can he do it? Wouldn't he be caught if he tried to leave the place with any of your goods?"

"Not if he was sly enough. Every one in the establishment is trusted, more or less, as it is necessary. I would like to know who that other man you met in the restaurant is. Brooks isn't such a bad fellow, and maybe he's only being led on by others, who are using him."

"That's what I thought probable at the time."

"I can't make out about that bagging ten thousand dollars. If they are going to rob me to that extent I want to know it. Now listen, Daniel, for we must at once lay our plans of procedure."

"Yes, sir. Only let me know your wishes or orders, and I'll obey them to the letter."

"Well, then, instead of coming here to work, I want you to watch Brooks. He has invited

you to board at the place where he is staying. Go there and get a room—one next to his, if possible. I will discharge him this week, as I already had determined to do. We will see what he does then, and shadow his every movement."

"I'll do it, sir."

"I will pay whatever expenses you may incur," continued Mr. Shepland, handing over a bill. "Here are ten dollars for a starter. Report to me every day, and when you need more funds don't hesitate to say so."

"I won't, sir; but I ought not to have to use much money in merely watching him."

"Perhaps not; but be sure to find out something about this friend of Brooks. If he is the party that I think he is, he is a personal enemy of mine, and will not hesitate to do all in his power to injure me, not even hesitating at a criminal act. He, therefore, is the man to watch."

"I understand," replied Dan. "And I'll do just what you want me to. It isn't exactly what I expected, but if it is to serve you I'll do my best, rest assured of that, sir."

After a few careful instructions from Mr. Shepland, Dan left the office.

It did not take him long to reach Broadway, and a horse-car soon took him to Waverley place.

Mrs. Smart's boarding-house was a modest brick dwelling, one of several in a block all probably built at one time, twenty or more years ago, when Waverley place was regarded as a very respectable residence street.

Ascending the steps, he rung the bell, and a tidy girl appeared.

"This is Mrs. Smart's boarding-house, I believe," said Dan.

"Yes, sir."

"Is the lady in?"

"Yes, sir. Will you step in?"

Dan accepted the invitation, and was ushered into the parlor.

In a moment Mrs. Smart, a short, pleasant-looking woman appeared.

"I am looking for a place to board," explained Dan.

"Is your name Dart?" asked the boarding-house-keeper, eying the boy scrutinizingly—as all boarding-house-keepers do every new applicant.

"Yes, ma'am; that is my name."

"Mr. Brooks just sent me a note that you might call."

This perplexed Dan.

"Mr. Carter Brooks is taking a decided interest in me," he thought. "But, never mind; I'll return the compliment—with interest, if I don't miss my guess."

"He says you are looking for board."

"Yes, ma'am. Can you accommodate me?"

The landlady again looked at the lad searchingly, and then showed that she was pleased by his general appearance as well as by his prompt and frank speech.

"I guess so. I have two rooms, one on the second and another on the third floor, that are vacant. Would you like to look at them?"

"Yes, ma'am, if it isn't too much trouble."

"None at all; it's business."

The two ascended to the second floor.

"Here's one of the rooms," said Mrs. Smart, pointing it out. "That, with board, is ten dollars per week."

"Where is Mr. Brooks's room?"

"On the third floor, next to the one I'm going to show you."

This was good news. Dan immediately lost interest in the apartment on the second floor, at any price.

"Suppose we go up there," he said. "I'd like to be near Mr. Brooks—he has taken such an interest in me. Besides, I suppose, being up higher it's cheaper."

"Eight dollars a week, with board."

"That will suit me better. I'm no millionaire, and want to pay my way as I go, so must live within my means."

Of course the applicant for board expressed himself perfectly satisfied with the room on the third floor.

"I'll take it at once," he said. "I have my valise with me, and—what time is it?"

"Five o'clock."

"When do your boarders dine?"

"At half-past six."

"Then I'll have a wash and make myself at home until that hour. Here is your money for one week in advance."

Dan handed Mrs. Smart the ten-dollar bill Mr. Shepland had given him.

Taking out a well-worn wallet the landlady passed over two dollars in change.

"Thank you, sir!" she said respectfully. "I guess you'll find everything all right. If there's anything you want, just ring the bell and I'll send one of the girls up to answer."

"All right."

A moment later Dan was left alone. Removing his coat and collar, he took a hasty wash and brushed his hair.

Then he stepped out into the hallway. No one was in sight, and leaving his door open so as to beat a hasty retreat if necessary, he entered Carter Brooks's apartment.

It was a room somewhat similar to his own, though more elegantly furnished. A violin rested on a stand in one corner, and on the wall hung a banjo and a guitar.

"Wonder if those instruments were all paid for?" soliloquized the amateur detective, as he gazed around.

Near the end of the bed stood a trunk. Dan hesitated a second, but considering that his actions were in the cause of justice, he raised the lid and peered in.

At first he saw nothing but clothing. But presently there came to light a bunch of inlaid and solid ivory violin pegs.

"Mr. Shepland is right. He is being robbed without a doubt," thought Dan. "Brooks has no use for all these things; and, besides, I doubt if a fellow like him could ever afford them."

A further search into the trunk revealed several bundles of violin and banjo strings, the value of which Dan could not even guess, though he was sure it must be considerable.

In one corner of the room was a closet, but a turning of the door-knob showed that it was locked.

"Wish it was open," said Dan to himself. "I'll venture to guess Brooks doesn't keep it locked for nothing."

Dan's foster-father had combined locksmithing with his horse-shoeing, so the foundling knew something about the former trade.

"Wonder how much time I've got before Brooks comes home?" he queried.

He remembered having seen an old family clock in the hall below. He glided down the stairs and found that it was just half-past five.

"An hour before supper," he thought. "I'll venture it."

On his table Dan had seen several hair-pins—whether belonging to Mrs. Smart or a former occupant of the room, he did not know.

It took but a few seconds to get one of the hair-pins and begin bending it into hook shape to work the lock.

His first effort was a failure, and so was the second.

All the while he kept his ears on the alert for fear of being caught by some one coming up from below.

The street door opened several times, and each time he left his work and sprung out into the hall.

His third effort was a success, and the closet door swung open.

Dan gave a cry of surprise.

The closet was full of musical instruments of all descriptions—some of them bare and others wrapped up in paper bags.

There were accordions, concertinas, fine flutes and clarionets, as well as several handsome silver cornets, and one or two old violins, that the sharp-witted boy knew must be valuable.

"I'm not much of a judge of these things," his thoughts ran, "but I'm satisfied that a thousand-dollar bill wouldn't buy all this stuff, even at wholesale price. How Brooks could get it here without being discovered is a mystery to me. Can it be possible that Mrs. Smart is in the secret?"

But Dan was not willing to believe this of the woman. The face of the landlady was candid itself, and he did not doubt for an instant but that she was innocent of any complicity in her boarder's wrong-doing.

"But I'm sure of one thing," he thought, "and that is that all this stuff belongs to Mr. Shepland."

A moment later he heard the door below slam to, and then hasty steps bounded up the stairs.

The inspector hardly had time to close the closet door and step into the middle of the room before Carter Brooks appeared.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, sharply. "What are you doing in my room?"

CHAPTER III.

DAN GETS INTO A TIGHT PLACE.

FOR an instant Dan hesitated, hardly knowing what to say. Then he put on the coolest manner possible.

"I saw your instruments hanging on the wall, as I passed your door, and I couldn't resist the temptation to come in and look at them," he replied. "I hope you'll excuse me for being so forward."

Carter Brooks smiled.

"Certainly," he replied. "Look at them all you please. Do you play?"

"I thump the banjo a little," answered Dan, which was the truth.

"I'd like to hear you play some time," returned Brooks, pleasantly.

He had been very pale on first entering the room, and was now doing his best to recover his self-possession, as Dan observed.

"Do you play much?" asked the boy.

"Hardly any."

"It's queer, and so many instruments, too."

"Yes, I've tried them all, but I'm no musician, and that's all there is to it. You can't learn a cat to bark or a cow to climb a tree. But I'm glad you found the place, and have made arrangements to stay, as I suppose you have, by your being here."

"Yes, I have taken a room here, and I think I'll like it."

"But you will—especially after you've partaken of one of her old-fashioned suppers. Hark! there goes the bell now! Better go down. I'll be down in a jiffy—just want to change my shoes—these hurt like the toothache."

"I will go down. I suppose I'll have to be introduced all around."

Dan walked down-stairs, feeling rather uneasy. The closet door was still unlocked, and Brooks might discover the fact, in which case Dan hardly knew what might happen.

"Must take the chances," he said to himself. "I've undertaken the job, and I'm going to see it through, if I don't make a botch of the business."

But a few moments later Brooks came down, and his easy manner apparently showed that he had made no unwelcome discovery.

Just before sitting down, Dan excused himself, and saying something about getting a handkerchief, ran up-stairs and relocked the closet door once more, putting his extemporized key in his pocket for possible use in the future.

Mrs. Smart's boarders numbered about a dozen, and Dan was introduced to all, as he had anticipated.

"Come to the city to work?" asked Brooks, when the meal was finished.

"Yes; got tired of the humdrum country and here I am."

"It's pretty hard to get a hold."

"I've got work with a friend."

"Oh! What at?"

"I don't understand it fully yet," replied Dan. "I only saw my friend for a little while this afternoon. It pays pretty well."

"That's the main thing," replied Brooks, heartily.

Nevertheless he looked disappointed.

"Confound it!" he mused; "if the boy didn't have any job, and little money, I might tempt him all the quicker. Guess I'll have to wait my chance, now."

"What are you going to do with yourself to-night?" he asked.

"Nothing in particular."

"Just my case. But I'll see if I can't arrange it so as we can have a jolly time to-morrow, if you will."

"I'm in for fun," returned Dan.

Presently Carter Brooks put on his hat and left the boarding-house, and of course the amateur detective was not slow in following him.

Brooks passed up the street to Broadway, where, at the corner, a man met him as if by appointment.

By the electric light Dan recognized the elderly individual who had been in the restaurant with Brooks earlier in the day.

The two, after a quiet greeting and brief walk down Broadway, arm in arm, turned down a side street, Dan following close behind, of course taking good care that he should not be discovered.

At length the two men came to a rather dilapidated building in a west side street that was little better than an alley.

Entering the hall of this house, they ascended the stairs leading direct from the dirty entrance to the floor above.

Dan hesitated. Should he follow them? What would be the risk?

The hall was dark and deserted. Apparently no persons were within hearing.

"It's a big venture," he thought, "but I'll

make it. It is business, and that is what Dan Dart is in for now."

In a second he was on the stairs. Hardly daring to breathe, he crept noiselessly to the first landing above.

A light streamed through the cracks of a door in the rear of the second hall.

Making his way to this door, he peeped through the key-hole.

The room seemed to be empty; not a soul was to be seen.

"That's queer. I'm sure the pair of them entered this room."

At that moment came a noise from the hall below, and the investigator had barely time to crouch behind a big dirt-box in the corner ere a burly man came up and passed into the room, opening and shutting the door as quickly as possible.

"Now he's come in, I'll see if he is there," Dan decided, and once again applied his eye to the key-hole.

As before, the room was empty!

"That settles it; that room only leads to another, and I'm going in."

Silently the resolute boy opened the door and entered. A smoking lamp swung from a bracket on the wall. By its rays he saw a narrow passage leading to the right side of the building.

A murmur of voices reached his ears. Stepping down this side passage he came to another door.

Near it was an angle in the wall that at one time had been used as a place of storage.

Several boxes and barrels were piled there, and, breathing a sigh of relief, the spy crept behind them.

On the ceiling above him shone a small round patch of light.

Looking up Dan found that it was caused by the light shining through an open stove-pipe hole about eight feet from the floor.

It did not take the alert lad long to place a box in position, and, standing upon it, he had a side glance into the room beyond.

The sight that met his gaze nearly caused him to cry out with astonishment.

There were the two men as well as two others. The party was seated about a table drinking, smoking and talking.

But, what attracted the pipe-hole spy's attention was the articles that were lying in one corner—several sets of iron and steel tools, two dark-lanterns, a massive bunch of keys of all kinds and sizes, and half a dozen black masks.

"Burglars' outfits, as sure as I'm a sinner!" gasped the boy at the pipe hole. "Guess I've struck a regular nest of them and no mistake."

He listened eagerly to catch what was being said.

"I say, Nick, you hav'n't shown us that key yet," remarked the burly ruffian who had been the last to enter.

The elderly man drew from the inside pocket of his coat a large brass store-key.

"Sure it will fit?" asked the other.

"I had it made from the wax impression Brooks gave me."

"Then you can rest assured it's all right," put in Brooks. "I was very careful with that impression. It's a good thing we've got it, too."

"Why so, Brooksey?"

"I've received notice that my services won't be required after next week."

"The deuce you say! Do they suspect anything?"

"I guess not. I've been rather lazy lately, on my books, and I think that's the trouble."

"Never mind," broke in the man who had not yet spoken. "After to-night's work none of us will want to do much except to spend money for awhile."

"You're right," replied the discharged book-keeper. "I go in for easy—"

Crack!

The box-top upon which Dan was standing had suddenly collapsed!

The noise was distinct and sharp, and all four men sprung to their feet.

"Some one's in the hall!" exclaimed the elderly man. "A spy! Don't let him get away alive!"

CHAPTER IV.

DAN MAKES SEVERAL MOVES.

DAN's heart nearly jumped into his throat. Would the four men discover him? And, if they did, what would be the consequence?

Hastily stepping down from the box he deftly slid behind a tall shutter which stood in the corner. Near by lay a piece of old rubber cloth, evidently used at times to protect goods from the rain, and this he quickly pulled over him.

A moment later one of the men came out. He

gave a sharp glance into the corner and then strode down the hall and through the room beyond. The spy kept so still he hardly breathed. He had no weapon of any kind with him, and realized that he was in an extremely perilous position.

All of the others followed the first man into the hall. They looked around searchingly, and Brooks even gave several of the boxes a shove with his foot.

"Guess we must have been mistaken," he remarked, as the man who had run out first came back. "See any one, Baxter?"

"No," replied the man addressed. "If there was any one here he got away mighty lively."

"How could he?" put in the elderly man. "He wouldn't know how to open the door. It's easy enough to get in, but getting out is quite another matter."

This was news to Dan.

"Easy enough to get in but quite another matter to get out!" he repeated to himself.

"What does that mean?"

Presently the four men entered the rendezvous, and, taking good care not to make any further noise, Dan waited for them to continue their conversation.

"Well, we'd better be moving," declared the elderly man to his pals. "You have the horse and wagon?" he continued turning to the burly burglar, who was named Baxter.

"Yes, it's in the stable ready to start," was Baxter's reply.

"Then let's go over there. What time is it?"

"Ten minutes to nine."

"Four hours yet. Put all the tools in a bag and we'll go over to Pop Morgan's and tell him to be prepared to receive the loot."

"I'm glad it's a dark night," observed Brooks, and Dan imagined that the dude's voice trembled.

"So am I," replied the man who had thus far had little to say. "It's never too dark for me, especially when the job's such a ticklish one as this of breaking old Shepland's strong box."

It did not take the quartette long to pack up what was to be taken along. This done, they blew out the light and left the building.

Dan tried to follow, but came to a sudden halt. The door was locked.

"This will never do!" he exclaimed to himself. "Here I am locked in, and in four hours those men intend to rob Mr. Shepland's establishment. If I can't get out and head off their villainous game I'm no good, and better pack my grip and go back to Grayville, at once."

The door was an ordinary one about an inch thick. The lock was of a common kind, and had there been any light Dan might have picked it, readily.

But it was dark; and, moreover, no time was to be lost.

As we have said, Dan was muscular for his age, and now his strength stood him in good stead.

Putting his shoulder to the door, he pushed with all his might.

The door yielded, and then there was a crack, and the lock was shattered into several pieces.

Of course the door opened when the lock broke, and passing through the doorway, and also through the next, Dan darted down into the street.

The men were out of sight, but the boy in trail ran down to one corner and then up to the other.

But it was no use. The delay in the hallway had made him lose the trail of the would-be robbers.

What was to be done next?

"If I only knew where Mr. Shepland lived, I'd see him at once. I'd rather tell him than put the case in the hands of the police. He certainly would know just the right thing to do."

On the corner was a drug store. Entering, Dan walked hastily to a clerk who was busy putting up a prescription.

"Have you a city Directory?" he asked.

"We have," was the reply.

"Can I see it for a moment?"

"Yes," curtly.

The clerk went on with the medicine he was preparing. Dan waited a moment in silence.

"Can I see the Directory at once?" he asked, politely. "It is necessary that I find a person's address immediately."

"What's the matter? Some one hurt?"

"No, sir."

"Sick, perhaps?"

"No, it isn't that, either, but—"

"Guess you can wait a moment or two then."

And the clerk calmly proceeded with his work.

"But I can't!" exclaimed Dan, somewhat ruffled.

"You'll have to," was the decisive reply.

"See here, don't be an idiot!" cried the boy.

"I wouldn't say it was necessary if it wasn't."

Just then the proprietor of the store stepped

out from a room in the rear.

"Show the young man the book, Collins," he ordered; "it would have taken less time to get it than to do so much talking."

With a sullen face the clerk got the volume and slammed it down on the counter.

"You think you're smart, don't you?" he whispered, bitterly.

"No, I don't think so," returned Dan.

"You don't, hey?"

"No, I don't think so; I know I'm smart."

Dan turned to the Directory, and grumbling to himself the clerk walked away.

It did not take long to find out that Mr. Shepland lived on East Eighty-third street, and putting down the number, Dan called out his thanks to the proprietor and hurried off.

An Elevated station was but two blocks away, and making for it he ran up the stairs and asked how near they ran to where he wanted to go.

Finding that it was but a few blocks he paid his fare and walked out on the platform.

In two minutes the train came along and he got aboard, sitting down in one of the middle seats.

Opposite to him sat an elderly woman. She was plainly dressed and her face looked tired and haggard.

She started upon seeing Dan, and stared at him in such a manner that he finally began to grow uncomfortable.

The window of the car was open, and presently the night air began to blow in strongly.

"Shall I close the window?" asked Dan, kindly.

"If you please," replied the woman, and then continued hesitatingly: "Hav'n't I met you before?"

"Not as I know of, ma'am," returned the Boy Spy.

"Perhaps I'm mistaken. You come from the city, I suppose?"

"No. I'm a country boy."

"Yes?"

"I come from Grayville, in the upper part of the State."

The woman gave a short cry.

"What did you say?" asked Dan.

"Nothing—I-I guess I'm mistaken. May I ask your name?"

"Dan Dart."

"Then I am mistaken."

The woman relapsed into silence, and presently Dan's station was reached and he got off.

So did the woman.

"Hello!" exclaimed the watchful boy, to himself; "I wonder if she can be following me?"

On Eighty-third street Dan found himself about a hundred yards away from Mr. Shepland's residence.

But he was a good walker and soon covered the distance.

As he ascended the stone steps leading to the front door he looked behind.

The old woman was still following him!

"Here's a go!" he thought. "It may be all a coincidence, but it looks mighty peculiar."

Without ringing the bell, Dan stepped into the vestibule and waited.

In a moment the woman came along. For an instant she hesitated before the house, and then, seeing the boy's form in the shadow, turned and hurried on.

"Well, that beats me," exclaimed Dan, to himself. "That woman either knows me, or else she's got something on hand that I'm not up to yet. I'll have to keep my eyes and ears open and find out."

And, somewhat disturbed in mind, the Boy Spy gave the door-bell several sharp pulls.

CHAPTER V.

DAN TELLS HIS STORY.

"Is Mr. Shepland in?" asked Dan of the girl who answered his summons.

"I believe so," was the reply. "Will you please step in? Who shall I say wishes to see him?"

"Dan Dart. Tell him it's important, too."

The girl offered the young caller a chair and then hurried up stairs.

"He has just retired, but will be down to see you in ten minutes."

Ten minutes! Dan made up his mind it was too long a time to wait.

"Please tell him I must see him at once," he urged, much to the girl's surprise.

"Yes, sir, certainly!"

It is time the girl was gone but a few seconds.

"Please follow me," she ordered on her hasty return.

Dan following, was ushered into a room on the second floor.

In a moment Mr. Shepland appeared wearing a dressing-gown and slippers.

"You have important news?" he asked, anxiously.

"Yes, sir, and it does not admit of any delay either," returned Dan. "They are going to rob your store to-night."

"Rob my store to-night? They—who?" ejaculated the importer.

"Brooks and three of his partners."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive! The robbery is to take place at one o'clock."

And sitting down Dan gave a hasty but accurate account of what had transpired during the past few hours.

Mr. Shepland listened intently.

"You have indeed done well!" asseverated the importer when Dan had finished. "Of course we will take steps to frustrate their plans without delay. Have you any idea who the elderly man is?"

"No, sir, his name was not mentioned."

"Well, we'll soon find out all about him—and about the rest of the gang, too. Excuse me five minutes till I hurry into my clothes."

Mr. Shepland disappeared into the next room. For a stout man he was astonishingly spry, and it was not long before he reappeared fully dressed.

As he entered, so did a little girl from another door.

"Why, Lucy!" exclaimed the importer, in surprise. "I thought Jenny had put you to bed an hour ago!"

"I was going, but heard you here and wanted to kiss you good-night again," returned the little miss, brightly. "Oh! I didn't know some one else was here!" she exclaimed, on catching sight of Dan.

Dan smiled. The little girl's manner pleased him.

"I thought it was Sam," explained the little girl. "Sam is papa's footman, you know."

"Is he?" was all Dan could find to say. He was a homeless boy, so had never had much to do with girls.

"Well, give me the kiss, Lucy," broke in Mr. Shepland, somewhat hastily. "Papa has got to go out for a while, and he expects his little girl to be safe in bed very soon."

"Yes, papa. Good-night."

The little miss gave him a kiss upon each cheek, and then a hearty one on the mouth.

"Good-night!" she said, pleasantly, to Dan, and an instant later was gone.

"God bless her, little motherless angel that she is!" exclaimed Mr. Shepland, fervidly.

Little did he dream of the terrible things that were in store for his beautiful daughter!

"We will take the Elevated train down-town at once," continued the importer to Dan. "As you say, there is no time to lose."

The trains were not running as often as they had been earlier in the evening, and it took them nearly half an hour to go where Mr. Shepland desired.

It was a police station. They found a lieutenant and a sergeant in charge.

Mr. Shepland knew the lieutenant, and taking him aside, told the officer his story.

"And now what is best to be done?" asked Mr. Shepland, when he had finished.

"We'll arrange to bag them at once," replied the officer, promptly.

"Just my idea."

"Is any one now in the building?"

"No. The janitor goes home at seven or eight o'clock."

"You have a key, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll get a couple of men and we'll go down at once. Just wait till I put on a plain coat, so as not to attract attention."

Dan was excited over the prospects, but he did not dread what was to follow. In fact, he rather liked the idea of having a lively time, and, as it might be, to show his metal. The detective fever was on him!

They were soon on the way. The lieutenant and his two men followed close behind the importer and his little investigator.

The night was dark; but few stars were shining, and the thin crescent of the new moon had long since gone down.

In Maiden lane all was dark and deserted.

"There is no one in sight," said the officer. "Let us get indoors as quickly as possible."

Inside but a single gas-jet was burning, and this gave a yellow, flickering light.

The establishment in this semi-darkness looked vast and gloomy, the many instruments standing and hanging like ghosts in grotesque attitudes.

"Half an hour yet," remarked Mr. Shepland, as he consulted his watch. "Wish it was over."

"Let's improve the time by arranging a plan of capture," suggested Dan.

"A good idea," replied the officer. "Let us first find a convenient hiding-place near the door where the entrance is to be made."

"This way, then," ordered Mr. Shepland.

And at once he led the way to a large closet at the rear of the store.

"That will do for myself and Jones, here," said the lieutenant, after he had examined the closet. "Now for Wilkens and you two—that is, if you want to take a hand in."

"I do," replied Dan, without hesitation. "I wouldn't have come along, if I didn't."

The officer smiled.

"From all accounts you're a plucky chap," he said.

"I certainly wish to do all I can to catch the scoundrels," put in Mr. Shepland, earnestly.

"There is another closet on the other side," he continued. "We use it as we do this—for broken instruments."

"That's a good place for all three of you."

"But one of us ought to be out in the alley," said Dan. "They are coming with a horse and wagon, you know, and we want to secure that, too."

The officer was doubtful.

It was a good suggestion, but as it came from a boy he did not like to admit it.

"Just the thing!" cried Mr. Shepland. "Just go ahead, Dan; you've taken care of yourself so far, and I guess you'll be all right. Only don't let them see you, or the game will be up."

"Never fear. I'll let them enter, and I won't do anything till I hear you doing something inside. Have you a key to the back door?"

"Yes." I'll open it for you," replied Mr. Shepland.

In a moment Dan found himself in the alley alone. The place was long, narrow and dirty, running out into Liberty street.

For an instant after the door closed behind him Dan stood silent in the shadow of the doorway.

Not a soul was in sight; not a sound broke the stillness of the night.

"It's the calm before the storm," he said to himself. "Never mind, I'm in for it, and I'll fight as hard as any man of them."

Near by was another doorway and beside it several empty packing-cases.

"Just the thing to hide in" was the foundling's thought.

In a moment he was inside of one of the cases.

"Snug as a bug in a rug," he soliloquized.

"Heigh-ho! This is city life for fair! Hav'n't been here a day, and now fixing to help the great New York police do their duty! Big business for a poor blacksmith's pick-me-up like me. I can't see—Hello, here they come!"

A noise at the end of the alley had attracted his attention.

Listening intently he caught the sound of wagon-wheels.

"Wonder they wouldn't be afraid of the policeman on this beat," thought Dan. "But, maybe he's in with them. Come to think of it the lieutenant didn't say anything about the man on duty here. Perhaps he wants to find out!"

Which was the exact truth.

A second later a wagon containing the four men drove up the dark alley.

CHAPTER VI.

A STRUGGLE IN THE DARK.

THE driver of the wagon was the elderly man.

"Whoa!" he exclaimed, softly, and the vehicle stopped.

He jumped to the pavement, and his three companions did the same.

"Not too loud," warned one of the men, when Dan recognized as Carter Brooks himself.

"Some one may hear you."

"There's no one around."

"You can't tell. There may be a tramp around somewhere."

"Let Baxter take a look around and make sure."

Dan shrunk back. He held a heavy billet of wood in his hand, ready for use, if it became necessary.

"Oh, pshaw!" protested Baxter. "It's all right. What's the use of losing more time? Hurry up and get through before daylight."

"That's the talk," put in the fourth man. "Nothing like making the most of your time."

Thus addressed, the leader said no more. From the bottom of the wagon he produced a dark lantern and lit it.

A few seconds of earnest conversation followed. Then Carter Brooks opened the store door, and allowed the lantern's rays to flash inside.

Presently the elderly man entered. One after another the others followed, closing the door behind them.

The secreted boy breathed freer. Rising from his cramped position, he made his way to the horse's side.

A strap lay in the bottom of the wagon, and with this he tied the horse fast to the iron grating of the window close at hand.

He had scarcely finished when he heard a noise from within.

There were several exclamations, the scuffling of many feet, and then the report of a pistol.

The sound of the shot had scarcely died away when the elderly robber sprung through the open doorway, and leaped upon the wagon.

The resolute lad made a dive for the man, and caught him by the coat.

"Let go, or I'll put a bullet through you!" hissed the robber.

"Not much, I won't!" replied Dan, determinedly.

Seizing the whip, the man hit the horse savagely over the back.

The frightened animal sprung forward, but only to come to a sudden halt.

"Trapped!" exclaimed the robber, bitterly, "and by a boy, too! Take that!"

He aimed a terrific blow with the whip-butt at Dan's head. Had it struck, the blow would probably have killed the boy, but he was not to be thus caught, for he dodged the stroke, and before the villain could recover, he dealt him a blow on the shoulder that knocked him clean off the wagon.

But, expert scoundrel that he was, as he went down, the man whipped out his hip-revolver and pulled trigger.

There was a flash, a report, and Dan felt a tingling sensation in the fleshy part of his arm that had given the blow.

"Shot!" he cried, but that was all, for with renewed purpose to have his man, he brought his club down with all force on the crook's head.

The blow was well given, and did good work, for the burglar fell back, senseless, with hardly a groan.

By this time a light shone out through the open doorway and the lieutenant stepped out.

He took in the situation at a glance, and by the time the fellow had recovered he was handcuffed.

"You're shot?" asked Mr. Shepland, as he now also appeared.

"Just a flesh-wound, I guess," replied Dan, somewhat faintly. "Did you capture the others?"

"Every one," replied the lieutenant.

"Your wound shall have the best of care at once," said Mr. Shepland. "Let's go inside and see who this fellow is," he continued, anxiously.

"It isn't necessary," put in the prisoner, sullenly. "You ought to know me, Shepland."

The importer stepped back in surprise.

"Nicholas Starfield!" he gasped. "I fancied it might be you, but still I could not believe it possible! Haven't you done me injury enough without adding burglary to your worse crimes?"

The man addressed as Starfield shrugged his shoulders.

"We are enemies to the end," he said, viciously.

"Yes; but think of what you have done in the past!" pleaded Mr. Shepland.

"And what did you do in the past?" cried Starfield, hotly. "Robbed me of the only woman I ever loved, curse you, curse you!"

"But it was fairly done. She loved me better than she did you; you know that. I did you no wrong!"

"Bah!"

"It's true. Besides, she is dead."

"A good thing."

"And our first-born as well."

"Wish I could say as much of the other," was all Starfield replied.

"You are a monster!" responded Mr. Shepland, indignantly.

"No, only a thwarted man, robbed of all he held most dear, and who in revenge engages in war to the knife with the man who stole from him the woman who should have been his wife."

Starfield turned to the lieutenant.

"Thanks to this cursed boy I'm in your hands. But I won't squeal. Which way?"

"We will all go inside," was the brief reply.

In the store the light had been turned on full. All the other men, including Carter Brooks, had been overcome and handcuffed.

Brooks started back upon seeing Dan.

"Where did you come from?" he cried, and then, suddenly:

"Oh, I see it all! You are nothing but a detective—you are no more a country-boy than I am!"

Dan smiled; Brooks's words were quite a compliment.

"He was certainly too smart for you, Brooks," put in Mr. Shepland, grimly.

The clerk winced.

"What are you going to do with me?" he asked, cringing.

"Let you fare as the rest of your miserable gang!" returned the importer. "First thing in the morning we will examine your room at your boarding-house and see what we can find there."

Meanwhile the lieutenant and his men were getting ready to march the prisoners to the station-house.

"You will make the charge in the morning against them?" he said to Mr. Shepland.

"Yes."

"Then we'll go. It's getting late—or early."

"Very well; I'll be on hand in the morning."

In a moment they were outside in the alley. The lieutenant made the prisoners get into the wagon, and then, climbing up with his men, the party drove off.

Mr. Shepland locked up his store again, when they were gone.

"Now we'll go around to a drug-store and have your arm attended to," he said to Dan, who was now very pale.

For some time he had felt the warm blood running down his arm, and as he held up his hand it dripped from his fingers!

"Oh, I'm all right," he asserted, bravely.

"You mustn't worry about me; I can—"

He did not finish. A flickering light danced before his eyes, and then he pitched forward into Mr. Shepland's arms.

The Boy Spy-Detective had fainted.

CHAPTER VII.

THE STOLEN CHILD.

"HELLO! this will never do!"

It was Mr. Shepland who uttered the exclamation.

Dan lay in his arms like a dead man.

Only a block away, on Broadway, was a drug-store.

Half carrying and half dragging his charge, the importer soon reached the place, but only to find it closed.

He rung the night-bell several times.

"Who's there?" came through the speaking-tube.

"Here's a man hurt. Come quickly. I'll pay you well."

"Who are you?"

The importer mentioned his name.

"Oh, all right, Mr. Shepland; be there in a second."

In a moment the door was unlocked, and the importer entered with his burden.

The case was quickly explained, and Dan was stripped bare to the shoulders.

"Only a flesh wound, but dangerously close," was the druggist's opinion.

"Fix him up well as you can to prevent further loss of blood."

"I will."

While the druggist was applying restoratives and bandages, he directed Mr. Shepland to ring the telephone and call up a surgeon who lived near.

This was done, and by the time Dan came to, the surgeon was on hand, and the arm was soon in proper form.

"A week of quietness will fix you up," he announced, when his task was done.

"A week!" exclaimed Dan. "I can't afford to stay idle so long."

"You can stay idle as long as you please," put in Mr. Shepland. "You are going home with me, and shall not do a stroke of work until you are perfectly well."

"Yes, but—" began Dan.

"No buts about it! You were injured in my

service, and for the present you are my guest. Can you walk to the Elevated station?"

"I guess so; I feel pretty strong."

Mr. Shepland paid the druggist and the surgeon well for their trouble.

"Then we'll go," he said.

It was not long before they were on the Elevated train on their way to the importer's place.

It was like a dream to Dan, and even more so when, a little later, he was shown into an elegant bed-chamber and allowed to pass the night on the most luxurious of couches.

"I'm certainly in luck," said Dan to himself, as he finished his regular nightly prayer. "I won't mind getting shot at all if I'm to be treated this way every time such a thing happens."

Nevertheless, in the morning he found his shoulder quite stiff, and, consequently, he did not finish dressing till some time after the breakfast-bell rung.

Going below, he found Mr. Shepland and little Lucy just sitting down.

"I was going to have you called but thought you might still be sleeping," said the gentleman.

"How is your shoulder?"

"Doing nicely," he replied.

He did full justice to the elegant meal that was served.

During the eating he became quite well acquainted with little Lucy, that precocious miss having taken a decided fancy to him.

"What am I to do to-day, sir?" asked Dan, as they arose from the table.

"Make yourself comfortable," was the reply.

"You had better stay at home here and read or do something else."

"You are going to the Police Headquarters?"

"Yes."

"I'd like to go along."

"Do you think you can stand it?"

"I guess so. I'm tougher than I look," assured Dan.

In a few moments they were on the way downtown.

"You seem to know this man Starfield," observed the boy, as they rode along.

"I do—to my sorrow. He has done me much injury—though I never willingly harmed the man," replied Mr. Shepland, contracting his brows. "Perhaps some day I will tell you the whole story."

It was not a great while before they reached the police station.

There was a commotion going on. Something unusual had happened.

"Wonder what's the matter?" Dan asked.

In the hall they met the captain of police, pale and excited.

"What's up?" demanded Mr. Shepland.

"A man who was arrested last night has escaped."

"What was his name?"

"Starfield."

The importer and his aid both uttered a cry.

"Starfield, the one I was most anxious to have secured!" groaned Mr. Shepland. "How did it happen?"

"Can't make out. He was put in a cell by himself, and, ten minutes ago, the keeper found the door open and the prisoner gone."

"Are the rest here?"

"Oh, yes, only Starfield is missing."

Mr. Shepland sat down, overcome.

"I would rather have had all three others escape than that man," he said to Dan.

"Never mind; maybe they'll soon find him," was the Spy-Detective's encouraging reply.

"We have a number of detectives already searching for him," put in the officer.

But Mr. Shepland shook his head.

"I doubt if you catch sight of him," he said. "That man is the slickest scoundrel in New York. I suppose you have postponed the examination for the present?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then, Dan, we'll go down to the store—that is, if your arm isn't hurting you."

"It's only a bit stiff, sir," replied the lad, which was the truth.

At the store the two held a long conference, the result of which was the sending of an officer of the police and one of the clerks with Dan over to Mrs. Smart's boarding-house.

Of course the good woman was greatly astonished when Brooks's true character was made known to her, and she wept bitterly at the disgrace brought upon the character of the establishment.

All the instruments hidden away in Brook's room were transferred to the police station to be returned to their rightful owner later.

Mrs. Smart was sorry to lose Dan, but as he

had paid her a whole week's board, he thought she had not much reason to complain.

Dan packed his valise quickly after the officer and the clerk had gone, and then, knowing not what else to do, he returned to Maiden lane.

He met his employer just coming from the store.

"I am too unstrung to do business to-day," explained the importer. "So I'm going home. Come, you had better go along. You need rest."

"I'll go along," replied Dan. "But I'm too wide-awake to go to sleep."

In a little while they reached Eighty-third street and ascended the steps of the mansion.

As they opened the door, one of the women servants came running toward them, her hair flying and her face streaming with tears.

"Oh, Mr. Shepland! what shall we do?" she sobbed. "Lucy has been missing for three hours, and we can't find her anywhere! I think she has been stolen away."

"Starfield's work!" muttered Dan, under his breath.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. SHEPLAND'S STORY.

LITTLE Lucy stolen!

It would be difficult to describe the consternation that followed this disagreeable announcement.

"You are sure?" gasped Mr. Shepland, clutching the woman's shoulder.

"Yes, sir; we've all hunted high and low, but we can't find her."

"Has she gone to any of her friends?"

"We've inquired at every house. Besides, she'd leave word, I'm sure," replied the woman.

"So she would. But something must be done," returned the importer. "Hunt again. I will send a call for help."

The woman departed, and Mr. Shepland sent a call through the telephone to the nearest police station.

"Let me take a hand in the search," said Dan.

"I know your daughter."

"Do as you think best."

The police soon came, and Dan went out with them.

At nine o'clock in the evening, tired and discouraged, he returned to the mansion.

He found Mr. Shepland walking up and down nervously in his library.

"Well?"

"No claw, sir," replied Dan.

"Are you sure?"

"Positive, sir."

Mr. Shepland uttered a groan.

"There must be some claw!" he cried. "My little girl could not have been spirited away."

"I believe it's Starfield's work," declared Dan, boldly.

Mr. Shepland grasped his hand.

"You are right!" he ejaculated. "It is only such a person would seek to injure me in this way. He has done the same thing before."

Dan started.

"What! stolen your little girl?"

"Not my little girl, but my little boy that was."

"You have a son?"

"He is dead now," Mr. Shepland turned away for an instant to wipe his eyes. "I'll tell you the story in a few words."

The importer was silent for a moment, and then began:

"Sixteen years ago Starfield and I were partners in business. He was fast in many ways, but understood his work and tended to it.

"We both loved the same woman. She preferred me, and we married.

"Starfield immediately broke up our business, and left, taking all the available funds with him.

"I did not follow him up, but by the advice of my wife, let his case drop, and started in business for myself, and was very successful.

"A year later a beautiful boy was born to us. We were very happy, and fairly worshiped the little one.

"A month passed. Then one day came the startling intelligence that the baby had been stolen from the nurse by Starfield, who had in some manner gained entrance to the house without being noticed."

Mr. Shepland paused for a moment, and mopped the perspiration from his brow.

Dan listened with deep interest. Was he not a foundling, perhaps stolen from home?

"The loss of the boy was a great blow. All the efforts of the police to find the little one were fruitless.

"In a few days I received a letter from Star-

field demanding ten thousand dollars as a ransom for my child. I did not know what to do. I was not rich then, and to pay such a sum would have ruined me.

"Nevertheless, I set to work to raise the sum. I mortgaged all I possessed heavily, and at the end of three weeks sent the money as required."

"And you got back your son?" asked Dan.

"Not until a month later, when the detectives got on the track of Starfield and his mother, who was taking care of the infant—if such handling as she gave it can be called care."

"Then it had not been well treated?"

"Well treated? All but that! It was half-starved, and so weak from rough usage that it never recovered, but died several weeks later."

"It was too bad," was all Dan could find to say.

"It was—both for my wife and myself. Had the boy lived, he would have been about your age."

"But a good deal better chap than I am," replied the lad, modestly.

"I should not ask to have him better," returned the importer.

"Oh, if only we could find Lucy!" he added, with a sigh.

Dan sat silent for a moment.

"After what you have told me, I'm sure it's Starfield's work, and no one else's," he said.

"Have you any idea where the man has been staying all these years?"

"In the city, I suppose. But stop! I heard that his mother had moved to Kenasaw. Perhaps he has been living with her."

"Where is Kenasaw?"

Mr. Shepland described its location on the shore of Lake Michigan.

"Tell you what I'll do," said Dan. "I'll go to Kenasaw, if you wish, and find out all I can."

"A good idea," cried Mr. Shepland, catching at the suggestion. "I'll pay your fare."

"Then I'm off in the morning."

"But your arm—"

"Must take care of itself."

"You are plucky and no mistake," returned Mr. Shepland.

Going to his safe, he drew out a roll of bills.

"Here are two hundred dollars," he said, handing the money over. "Don't be afraid to use it. If you get any information, telegraph at once. And let me say that I have a presentiment that you are on the right track."

"So have I," replied Dan. "Good-night. I'm off first thing in the morning."

Dan left the library and went up-stairs, to get ready for his journey.

His preparations were very simple. His valise from Mrs. Smart's still remained packed.

In the morning he was down bright and early.

He took breakfast alone, and at half-past eight was on his way to the Grand Central Depot.

He spent a good hour reading an account of the abduction in one of the morning papers, and then spent the remainder of the day in speculating upon his strange and hasty mission.

He hardly noticed the beauty of the country through which they were passing, and at ten o'clock was willing enough to retire to his bed in the sleeper.

It was nearly noon of the next day when he arrived at his destination.

Hungry and cramped in limbs, he alighted from the car and inquired his way to a good hotel.

He was directed to the Eagle House.

In a quarter of an hour he had reached the place and taken a room.

"I'll make myself at home," he arranged, "and then keep my eyes and ears open. It seems like a wild-goose chase, but there's nothing else to be done."

His room was No. 43, and after paying for one day in advance, a porter conducted him to the apartment.

"I'll take a wash and then have some dinner," thought Dan. "Goodness knows I'm hungry enough."

As he set down his valise a bit of paper upon the floor attracted his attention.

Moved by a natural curiosity, Dan picked it up and read it.

This was all it contained:

"pr pare to
few da's.
NICHOLAS STA"

Dan was astonished beyond measure.

In an instant it flashed through his mind that Starfield had but recently occupied that same room.

If this was so, he was indeed on the right track, and might hope to find little Lucy in a short while, perhaps that very day.

He searched the floor eagerly for more of the torn sheet.

He found nothing but the corner of an envelope having a broad ink mark across its face.

The first piece had lain near the window, which was open, and this led Dan to the supposition that the other bits had been thrown out.

The window opened upon a narrow alleyway, the bottom of which was filled with rubbish.

Taking an old letter from his pocket, he dropped it out.

Then he went below, and asked the dapper clerk how he could get to the alley to find the letter, and was shown to a back door that led to the place.

Dan was not long in getting there.

He spent fully a quarter of an hour among the rubbish, and returned to his room with some twenty bits of paper in his possession.

It was no easy matter to fit the pieces together. But it was done, and then Dan found that he had a letter and an addressed envelope complete.

The letter ran as follows:

"DEAR MOTHER:—The papers may have me in as arrested, but I am a free man. I am again on the make. Don't answer this, but prepare to receive me and a young stranger in a few days—maybe sooner."

NICHOLAS STARFIELD.

The envelope was directed:

"MRS AGATHA STARFIELD,
921 Lake View Terrace,
Kenasaw—"

At the end of the s a heavy mark was made, and this ran back through the name.

"But he changed his mind about sending the letter at the last minute," said the Boy Spy, to himself.

The note and envelope gave Dan the knowledge of several important facts:

Starfield was in the city or its vicinity.

He had little Lucy with him, and Mrs. Starfield still lived in Kenasaw.

He did not know where Lake View Terrace was located, and determined to find out at once.

Taking a hasty wash and brushing up, he went below.

Dinner was ready, and he sauntered into the dining-room.

At one of the tables sat an old man, and taking a seat opposite, Dan soon put himself upon easy terms with the elderly gentleman.

"Acquainted in the town?" asked the Boy Spy, presently.

"Well, rather," was the hearty reply. "Lived here twenty years. Only moved to Chicago last year."

"Then perhaps you can tell me where Lake View Terrace is located?"

"It's the street that runs along lake—the one next to this."

"And where do the numbers begin?"

"Two blocks below. Where do you want to go?"

"Somewhere's near 900."

"Nine hundred? That's about a mile north of here. It's about the end of the road," replied the old man.

"Thank you," said Dan.

He resolved to pay Lake View Terrace a visit in the evening, thinking darkness would best suit the purpose he had in mind.

CHAPTER IX.

AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY.

At eight o'clock Dan left the hotel.

It was quite dark, and the streets were almost deserted.

Thanks to the information he had received, he had no difficulty in finding the lake-shore, and was soon walking on the broad, sandy road that was known as the Terrace.

He walked fully half a mile. The houses were further apart, and it was decidedly lonely now.

Presently he met a young fisherman and asked him if he knew Mrs. Starfield.

"Who, the Widow Starfield?" asked the young man, curiously.

"Yes."

"I do—everybody does."

"Where does she live?"

"In the fifth house below. But you ain't going to her place to-night, be you?" asked the fisherman.

"I guess so," returned Dan.

"Better not."

"Why?"

"There are ghosts around her place at night."

The Boy Spy laughed.

"I'm not afraid of them," he said.

"You don't believe me, but it's a fact."

And the young fisherman shook his head warningly.

"Who says so?"

"Every one. I've seen 'em with my own eyes. Tall ghosts in white with torches in their hands."

"I reckon they won't hurt me," replied Dan. "Better keep away, sir; it's dangerous fooling around there."

And with this warning the young fisherman hurried off.

"So that is the way the Starfields manage to remain undisturbed," thought Dan. "Well, it's all right, but it shall not stop me from paying the widow a visit."

Dan soon reached the fifth house.

It was a small one-and-a-half-story cottage, surrounded by a mass of shrubbery.

A light was burning in the kitchen, and, creeping up to the window, Dan peered in.

The apartment was empty.

"That's queer," he thought. "Wonder if there is nobody at home?"

A moment later the door leading to the attic opened, and a woman bearing a candle in her hand entered.

Dan was spellbound.

It was the same woman who had questioned him in the Elevated train and had afterward followed him to Mr. Shepland's mansion!

"Can this be Mrs. Starfield?" he thought. "If it is, then she is in league with her son and Carter Brooks. But what was her purpose in following me? and why didn't she stop the attempt at robbery when she saw I was on the track of it?"

Blowing out the candle, the woman placed it upon the mantel-piece and sat down beside the table.

As she did so Dan heard a noise in the direction of the lake.

An instant after a man came walking up from the beach.

Instinctively Dan crouched behind a clump of bushes.

The man had reached the shore in a rowboat. He tied the painter of the craft fast to a stake and then approached the house.

It was hard to distinguish the individual's face. But Dan recognized the tall form of Nicholas Starfield!

Starfield approached the kitchen and knocked loudly on the door.

It was quickly opened, and the man entered. Turning to the side window, which was open, for the night was warm, Dan saw Starfield drop heavily into an arm-chair.

"Seems to be tired," thought Dan. "Wonder where he has been?"

He could not catch the first words that were spoken, but presently, by listening intently, he caught the woman's words.

"And you say that everything is fixed," she was saying.

"Yes," replied Starfield. "You know we haven't used the place for fifteen years, and I can tell you it was in a miserable condition."

"Had it been used?"

"Guess not. I don't believe any one ever set foot on the island, or, if they did, they never went far from the shore. I found the path choked with weeds, and could scarcely find the house."

"Was it in good condition?" asked the woman, anxiously.

"Almost a wreck. Half the roof was gone. But it's all right now, and I'm glad of it. We can go there, and no one will know where we are."

"And I suppose you expect me to live there for wretched days together," put in the woman, in bitter tones.

"Nonsense, mother! When Fred Shepland comes down with the rocks we'll live like princes," replied Starfield, confidently.

"Suppose he doesn't pay?"

"No fear of that. He's had too dear an experience to refuse. He knows that to me revenge is almost as sweet as money."

"Not quite, Nicholas."

"No, not quite—money lasts longer."

"How much have you asked of him?"

"Twenty thousand dollars."

"As much as that?"

"Yes. Why not? He can afford to pay it well enough."

"And if he doesn't?"

"Then let him beware! I'm not to be trifled with, I swear it."

And Starfield brought his hand down upon the table with great energy.

Of course Dan was greatly interested.

But what had become of little Lucy?

It was a puzzling question.

But it was soon answered.

"What have you done with the young one?" presently asked Starfield of his mother.

Dan held his breath, so eager was he to catch the answer.

"She is up stairs," replied Mrs. Starfield. "I've had an awful time with her since you left."

Dan almost jumped up in his excitement.

Little Lucy was in the house!

"I'll rescue her or die in the attempt," he muttered to himself, and shut his teeth hard.

He regretted that he had provided himself with no weapon.

"A pistol might prove mighty handy," he said to himself. "But as it is, I'll have to do the best I can without it."

Yet he realized that Starfield was a strong man, and if brought to bay might prove a dangerous antagonist.

"Well," said Starfield, "we might as well be moving. I'm tired, and I'm sure I'll get no rest till we are safe on the island. Have you got all the bundles ready?"

"Yes. But it seems a pity to disturb the child, now she is asleep," replied the woman.

"Oh, pshaw! It's no use getting squeamish. Your faint-heartedness cost us enough years ago."

"Nicholas, I can't help having some feeling."

"It's all rot. What feeling did Fred Shepland and his cursed wife have for me, I'd like to know?"

"Yes, but, Nicholas—"

"No buts. If he had his way, I'd been in the jail this very night!"

"And you shall be if I can accomplish it," added Dan, under his breath.

"Come, hurry up," continued Starfield to his mother. "The boat is all ready down to the beach, and the sooner the job is over, the better."

"But it's so fearfully dark," returned Mrs. Starfield, shuddering.

"Don't matter. I know every foot of the way. Where are the bundles?"

"In the corner."

"I'll take them down with me. Bring the young one as soon as you can. If she screams, throw a shawl over her head."

And, with this parting advice, Nicholas Starfield left the house.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE WATER.

To say that Dan was surprised and delighted at the success of his venture thus far would be putting the thing mildly.

Fortune had directed him rightly from the start.

In less than thirty-six hours he had not only found Starfield, but had also discovered the whereabouts of little Lucy.

The prospects were exciting, but Dan managed to keep cool, and intently watched Starfield as the man made his way to the beach.

The abductor of the little girl was evidently going to some island in the lake.

Dan knew there were many islands, and he could not help but wonder which was to be Starfield's destination.

"If I knew, I would go and get the police to follow them at once," he said, to himself. "But as it is, I'll have to keep shady and see if I can find out."

He saw Starfield proceed to the water's edge and get into a row-boat.

An instant later the cottage-door opened and Mrs. Starfield came out.

She was dragging little Lucy by the hand.

The child was crying bitterly and appealing piteously to be sent back to her papa.

Dan's blood boiled at the sight.

He felt like rushing forth from his hiding-place and snatching little Lucy from her tormentors by force.

But he realized the folly of this. Starfield would attack him at once, and even if Dan could resist him, the abductor and would-be robber would certainly escape.

"I'll bide my time, and bag both him and his mother," was Dan's thought.

He followed to the boat.

Starfield was ready for his mother and her charge.

Telling little Lucy to "hush up or he'd know the reason why," the man lifted her into the boat and sat her on the stern seat.

Mrs. Starfield followed, and then her son shoved off and began to row out into the lake.

Dan was perplexed. The boat was rapidly receding in the darkness, and in two minutes would be out of sight.

What was to be done?

Running up the beach, the Boy Spy-Detective soon came to another craft, pulled up high and dry and tied to a stake by a thin rope.

To his joy, the oars were lying across the seats.

"Here's luck!" he cried. "Necessity knows no law, so here goes."

Taking out his knife, he severed the rope.

Then he shoved the boat into the water and jumped aboard.

"I suppose the owner will think his boat has been stolen, but I can't help it. I'll hunt him up some other time, and explain matters."

Thus thinking, Dan sat down to the oars.

In his excitement he forgot all about his wounded shoulder.

Starfield's boat was barely visible, and he started manfully after it.

The course was in a northwest direction.

As he rowed along he noticed that two prominent lights in the city were directly in line with each other, and he resolved to remember this so that he would not become bewildered should he attempt to turn back.

This straight course continued for nearly an hour.

Dan's arms—especially the wounded one—began to ache.

He began to have his doubts about being able to hold out much longer.

But relief soon came.

An island loomed up in the darkness directly ahead.

It appeared to be quite large, and was covered with a heavy growth of trees and bushes.

Dan saw the boat ahead shoot into a little cove.

Turning aside he sent his own craft into the cover of the bushes near by.

In a moment he saw Starfield jump out and draw up his boat well out of the water.

"Now give me the young one," Dan heard him say.

Mrs. Starfield handed over little Lucy, who was still sobbing.

The man led the way from the shore.

Lighting a lantern she had brought the mother followed close behind.

As soon as the two were gone, Dan made his way to where the other boat lay.

Taking the oars out of her he hid them in the bushes.

"That will prevent them from leaving in a hurry," he thought.

In a moment he was on the trail. He was extremely cautious in his movements, and walked with the stealthiness of a cat.

The course was an irregular one, over rocks and through dense undergrowth.

Presently they struck a sort of path, and then it became easier for Dan to follow the little party.

The by-path had evidently been in disuse for a number of years. Large sticks and stones obstructed the way.

Over these Mrs. Starfield stumbled and fell.

The lantern struck a rock, and the glass was completely shattered.

Dan heard the woman utter an exclamation, heard little Lucy scream and the man say:

"It's a good thing we're almost there. It was bad enough walking with the lantern, but in the dark it's ten times worse."

"I haven't trod this path for fifteen years, and it's all strange to me," replied Mrs. Starfield, as she picked herself up.

"I say it was a neat trick we played on Fred Shepland when we—" began Starfield as he continued on his way.

"Hush!" broke in his mother hastily. "Remember the little girl is here. Do you think he ever found it out?"

"No."

"Nicholas, that devil will out some day."

"Nonsense! Not unless you tell it."

As Starfield uttered the last words he stepped into a small clearing.

In the back stood a small cottage, moss-covered and dilapidated.

A door on the side afforded the only entrance, and pushing it open Starfield and his mother, with little Lucy, entered.

"So this is the place they are going to stay for the present," Dan said to himself as the door closed. "Well, I'm glad I found it out. It's a good hiding-place, sure enough, but I guess they won't think so when I bring the police down on them."

Dan made his way rapidly back to the shore,

det rmined to reach the Kenasaw Police Station as soon as possible.

But when he approached the water's edge Dan uttered a cry of alarm.

And well he might, for both rowboats had disappeared!

CHAPTER XI.

DAN INFORMS THE POLICE.

IN vain Dan strained his eyes in search of his own craft or the one belonging to Starfield.

The little coves into which both boats had been beached were empty.

"That's queer!" thought Dan. "They were here less than a quarter of an hour ago."

The disappearance of the crafts was a sore anxiety.

Without one or the other, how was he to return to Kenasaw and inform the police?

The distance was too far to swim.

Besides, it was dark, and with his wounded arm it would have been almost suicidal to undertake the task.

"It's tough luck," he muttered to himself. "But it shall not stop me from getting back even if I have to build a raft."

Dan was too plucky a boy to give way to despair.

"There's one consolation," he declared to himself, "if I can't leave the island neither can Starfield. The only difference is they've got something to eat and I haven't."

Presently the thought struck Dan that perhaps the boats had only drifted from their moorings, and floated but a short distance away.

This idea gave him renewed hope, and he was not long in instituting a hasty search up and down the shore.

"Eureka! there's one of them!" he exclaimed.

True enough, there was his own boat not over two hundred feet from where he had left it!

Dan was not long in getting aboard and shoving off.

Starfield's boat was still missing.

"I'm glad of it," the lad declared to himself.

"Hope it drifted away altogether. If it has, they are prisoners already."

Far away in the distance twinkled the many lights of the city, throwing long flashes of fire over the water.

Remembering the two lights that had been his guide during the chase, Dan got them again in range and started on the return.

It was slow work. His arm pained him considerably now, but yet he stuck to the oars.

He was glad when the mainland was reached.

He beached the boat at the exact spot from which he had taken it, and tied it fast as he had found it.

"Her owner will never know that she has been used," he said to himself.

Half an hour's rapid walking brought him to the busy portion of the city.

Stopping a policeman, he inquired the way to the station.

It was but three blocks off, and in a few moments Dan stood in the main office.

He found a sergeant and two men in charge.

"Well, young man, what's wanted?" asked the sergeant, Wood by name.

"I want two people arrested," replied Dan, briefly.

"Who?"

"A man and a woman."

"What for?"

"Abduction."

The sergeant began to grow interested.

"Who are the people and who have they abducted?" he asked.

"A man and his mother. They have abducted little Lucy Shepland, of New York City."

The officer jumped up.

He had read about the case in the evening paper, and knew many of the particulars.

"Are you sure you are not mistaken?" he questioned, closely.

"Positive, sir," returned Dan. "I know my man and I know the little girl, and I've seen them both."

"Where do you come from?"

"New York."

"Live there?"

"Live anywhere. I'm following this case up for Mr. Shepland."

"The young girl's father?"

"Yes."

The sergeant stared at Dan.

"You don't mean to say you're a detective!" he cried.

"Hardly that, but just now I'm doing a detective's work."

"Well, I'll be blamed! What's your name?"

"Dan Dart."

"Dart? Dart? Are you the Dart who helped capture that Starfield and his gang who were trying to rob Shepland's store?"

"That's me. And it's this same Starfield who's abducted Lucy Shepland," added Dan.

And, sitting down, he related all the particulars of his story.

"You're lucky and clever both," said Sergeant Wood, when Dan had concluded. "Do you think you can find the island in the dark?"

"Easily enough."

And Dan mentioned the lights that had been his guide.

Sergeant Wood meditated a moment.

"We'll go over and capture them at once. If we wait till morning they may escape us. Will you go along?"

"Certainly. You don't suppose I want to go hunting, and then not be in at the death?"

"Then we'll start at once. Kerry?"

One of the men, who had been dozing upon a bench, sprang up and rubbed his eyes.

"Did yez call me, sor?" he asked.

"Yes. I have work for you. We are to go out."

"Where to, sor?"

"I'll tell you on the way. Robbins!"

"Yes, sir," replied the other policeman, sleepily.

"Kerry and I are going out for a few hours. You take charge till I return. If anything unusual happens send for the captain."

"I will, sir."

"And don't fall asleep."

"No fear, sir."

The sergeant took down his hat from a peg and put it on.

"Take along two pairs of handcuffs," he said, to Kerry.

"Yes, sor."

"And see that your pistol is all right."

"A foight, eh?" exclaimed Kerry. "Well, I'm the bboy as is in for just that same!"

The water was soon reached.

Here a good-sized boat belonging to the police was procured, and they were speedily on their way.

Dan wondered why it was that the sergeant and his man could row so well, but he afterward learned that to be skillful at the oars was part of their duty.

"Now, where are the lights?" asked the sergeant, presently.

Dan pointed them out.

"Keep them in a straight line and you can't miss the island," he added.

"How far is it do you suppose?"

"Nearly a mile."

"Then it's Star Island, as I thought. Come, Kerry, give way."

As they rowed along the sergeant gave his man an inkling of what to expect.

"Och, the villain," exclaimed the Irishman, referring to Starfield. "To steal an innocent little fairv from her fayther! Just wait till I get me hands on him!"

Twenty minutes sufficed for the voyage.

They made an easy landing, and soon stood at the beginning of the path that led to the cottage.

"Better light up," said the sergeant. "It's as dark as pitch."

Kerry lit a dark-lantern and opened the slide.

"I will show you the way," said Dan. "I've only traveled it twice but I know it pretty well."

"Hold the lantern up," said Sergeant Wood.

"We don't want to stumble and break our necks."

"Yes, sor," replied Kerry.

"And when we reach the place be very quiet," cautioned the sergeant.

In ten minutes they had come to the end of the path.

The cottage stood before them.

"Are you both ready?" asked Sergeant Wood.

"Yes," was the quick reply.

"Then follow me."

Sergeant Wood opened the door of the cottage and entered.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CAPTURE OF STARFIELD.

THE interior of the cottage was totally dark.

Dan and the others took but a few steps, and then stopped to listen.

They heard the heavy breathing of some one lying in the corner.

"It must be Starfield," whispered the Boy Spy-Detective, lowly.

"Give us a little light," said Sergeant Wood to Kerry, who had closed the lantern.

The policeman partly opened the slide, allowing a long streak of light to quiver upon the wall opposite.

By this illumination they beheld Starfield lying upon a cot in the corner.

He was sleeping, with his face to the wall.

One hand hung loosely over the edge of his couch.

Stepping cautiously forward, Dan raised his head, and drew the abductor's two hands together.

Then he motioned to Kerry to bring the handcuffs.

"Good!" whispered the sergeant. "You are a born officer."

And he held the lantern while his man did as Dan directed.

Just as the job was finished, the sleeping man awoke with a start.

He tried to move his hands, and finding that impossible, jumped to his feet in alarm.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded.

"It means that you are my prisoner," replied Sergeant Wood.

"Your prisoner?"

Starfield was bewildered.

To be awakened from a sound sleep to such a thing as this was a complete surprise to him.

"That's what I said. Kerry, watch him."

"But what have I done?"

"Abducted little Lucy Shepland, for one thing," replied Dan, stepping forward.

"Who are you?" demanded the would-be robber, boldly.

But, as the light fell upon Dan's face, he uttered a cry of mingled astonishment and alarm.

"What—yo—you!" he faltered.

"Yes, Mr. Starfield, me," returned the lad.

"Guess you didn't expect to see me again quite so soon."

"You shall suffer for this! It's the second time you have dogged me!" exclaimed Starfield, venomously.

"Come, none of that!" put in the sergeant, sternly. "Is your mother here?"

"No."

"Yes, she is," exclaimed Dan. "She is probably in there."

And he pointed to the front room, the door of which was closed.

Sergeant Wood tried the door.

It was locked.

"Where is the key?" he asked.

"I don't know," was the surly reply.

"Then we'll break down the door!" exclaimed Dan. "I'm sure his mother is in there, and the little girl, too."

And Dan made a move as if to carry out his threat.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Starfield. "No use of that. Maybe I can find the key if you'll give me time."

"Well, hurry up," returned Sergeant Wood, impatiently.

Starfield began a slow search for the missing key.

He looked in all odd corners, and stopped several times to scratch his head as if in perplexity.

His movements were so unaccountable that they set Dan to thinking.

In an instant the solution to the mystery flashed over our hero's mind.

Starfield was trying to gain time so that his mother might have a chance to escape!

"Watch him!" he shouted, and he made a bolt for the outer door.

Once outside, he ran around to the front of the house.

His surmise was correct.

The window of the other room was wide open.

A glance within made him almost certain that the apartment was empty.

"Too late!" he ejaculated, in dismay. "Oh, what a fool I was not to think of this sooner!"

From the thicket beyond he heard the faint cry of a girlish voice.

"Papa! help me, papa!"

"It's Lucy's voice!" he cried.

And away he went in the direction of the sound as fast as his legs could carry him.

It was still as dark as ever.

Once Dan stumbled and fell.

His clothing was torn, and his knee was cut and began to bleed.

Still he plunged on.

In the distance he could yet hear little Lucy's cries.

They were growing fainter, but whether it was because she was becoming exhausted or because she was further off, he could not tell.

"I won't give up," he exclaimed, setting his

teeth bared. "I've made up my mind to restore her to Mr. Shepland, and I'm going to do it."

Gradually he felt that he was gaining upon Mrs. Shepland, and when he came to a little clearing he was overjoyed to see the woman, with little Lucy in her arms, just ahead.

"Stop!" he called out. "Stop! it will be best for you!"

Mrs. Starfield paid no attention to his threats. "Guess she means to fight!" said Dan to himself. "Well, I'll handle her just as gently as a woman like her deserves to be handled, but no more."

As he sped along his foot struck a stout stick, and stooping down he picked it up.

It was about two feet long and quite heavy. "It will be good to defend myself with if nothing else," he thought to himself.

Little Lucy had heard Dan call out, and imagining that some sort of a rescuer must be at hand, was screaming louder than ever.

On and on pursued and pursuer dashed, over the rocks and through the thick undergrowth.

Mrs. Starfield had a decided advantage.

Though she had not been upon the island for a number of years she knew every foot of the way.

She decided to lead Dan into a trap.

Not a great way off was a pool, and around this for fully fifty feet the ground was a perfect quagmire.

"I'll teach the young fellow to follow me!" she muttered to herself.

And a hard cold gleam passed over her eyes.

It was easy to see from what source Nicholas Starfield's cruelty had been inherited.

It took the woman but a few moments to reach the neighborhood of the pool. Several spots of solid ground were scattered around, and jumping from one to the other she landed little Lucy and herself safely upon the other side.

Then she waited for Dan to appear, and he was not long in coming.

Through the open space he saw her form and renewed his speed.

"Stop!" he called out. "Stop! or I will fire!"

As we know, he had neither pistol nor gun, but thought his threat might frighten the woman.

Mrs. Starfield shook one of her fists at him.

"Go back with you!" she cried, derisively.

"Go back, or you'll never get home again alive! Do you think I'm to be caught by a boy?"

Of course Dan paid no attention to her warning. He did not understand its full and horrible meaning; so on he dashed.

Suddenly one of his feet sunk into the soft soil, but he did not mind this, and took several more steps.

Then the very ground beneath him seemed to give way.

"Hallo! what's this?" he cried.

A mocking laugh rung in his ears.

He struggled to turn back, but too late!

There was no footing anywhere, and he realized that a few moments more might bring death!

CHAPTER XIII.

ADVENTURES ON THE ISLAND.

"HELP! help!" Dan uttered the cry more because there seemed to be nothing else to do than that he thought it would bring assistance.

He floundered to free himself and gain the solid ground again, but every movement only served to sink him deeper into the treacherous mire.

"Merciful Heaven! is it all to end this way?" he thought, in horror.

He turned his head to see if Mrs. Starfield was still on the other side, but both the woman and little Lucy had disappeared.

Dan was now up to his waist, and slowly, surely sinking; soon he would be up to his shoulders, then his chin—and then?"

He shivered in the agony of dread.

"It's life or death!" he muttered, to himself.

"And I don't intend to give up without the tallest kind of a struggle; so here goes!"

And struggle he did. For full ten minutes he worked body, arms and legs.

The perspiration poured from his face, and he began to blow like a porpoise.

His efforts were totally useless.

Not a foot could he advance or retreat.

"I'm stuck, and no mistake!" he thought, gloomily. "I suppose it's only a question of time as to how long I'll be able to keep my head above this—this muck."

For a moment he paused to regain his breath.

He was now up to his shoulders.

"Ten minutes more and it's good-by!" he thought.

Suddenly he fancied he heard a noise in the distance.

He listened intently.

It was a faint shout.

"It is the sergeant or his man!" was the thought that rushed through his mind.

And drawing a deep breath, Dan yelled as he had never yelled before.

How eagerly he listened for an answer.

But none came.

Again Dan yelled, and then for a third time, with all the strength of his lungs.

This time an answer came.

"Where—are—you?"

"Here! Here! Here!"

And Dan continued to repeat the single word until the bushes beyond the edge of the pool parted and Kerry appeared.

The policeman was none too soon.

The Boy Spy was already up to his neck in the quagmire.

"That's the matter?" cried the policeman, as he held up his lantern. "Where's the woman and the girl?"

"Save me!" gasped Dan. "I can't get out!" and he fell back exhausted.

Fortunately, Kerry understood the situation at a glance; his native home had been full of bogs and pitfalls of a similar nature.

"Och! it's a bog-hole ye'r in, so it is!" he exclaimed. "Bad 'cess to 'em!"

In an instant he set down his lantern and broke off a long branch from a bush that grew near.

"Catch hold o' that!"

Dan grabbed the branch just in time to prevent his head from going under.

It was no easy job for even the strong Irishman to pull him to the solid ground.

Once Kerry slipped, and came near sliding in himself.

But he regained his footing, and a moment later Dan stood beside him.

The Boy Spy was wet to the skin, and his clothing was covered with mud.

Yet he did not mind even these inconveniences, so overjoyed was he to be out of danger once more.

"A few minutes more and I would have been a goner!" he panted.

"Never mind; 'a miss is as good as a moile,'" returned Kerry. "Where did the woman go to?"

"Into the thicket yonder," replied Dan.

"And I'm going after her," he added, with energy.

He was pretty well exhausted, but such a thing as giving up never entered his mind.

"I'll go wid ye," said Kerry.

"Is Starfield safe?" asked Dan.

"Indeed, so he is, handcuffed and his feet tied in the bargain," was the reply.

"Good. We must take good care that he doesn't get away."

While the two were speaking they had passed around the edge of the pool and entered the woods again.

The lantern served them well, and by its rays they soon discovered the direction which Mrs. Starfield had taken.

On and on they pressed, the trail, if it might be called such, getting fresher at every step.

But presently Kerry, who walked first, with the light, uttered a cry of dismay.

They had suddenly come to the shore!

Nothing but the water lay beyond.

"Well, by the banshee of Donegal!" exclaimed the Irishman, scratching his head. "That's to do now!"

Dan shook his head in perplexity.

"Could they have gone into the water?" he asked.

"Don't know. Wait till Oi see how deep it is."

Investigation proved that the bottom was at least five feet below the surface.

"Mrs. Starfield couldn't have waded, that's certain," said our hero. "Let us beat around a bit. She may be in hiding under our very noses."

"The little giral would let us know."

"Perhaps she has gagged her," said Dan.

"True! Oi didn't think o' that."

Nearly a half an hour was spent in a fruitless effort, and then the two paused.

"Oi give it up," declared Kerry. "We'll have to be getting back soon," he added. "The sergeant will be getting impatient, so he will."

"You can go back," returned Dan. "I'm going to stay here."

"Alone!"

"Yes."

"In the dark!"

"Yes. But let me have a few matches. Mine are all wet."

Kerry gave him the matches.

"Have ye a pistol?" he asked.

"No."

"Oi have two."

"Then lend me one."

Kerry handed over the weapon.

"When will ye be back?"

"I can't say. I mean to stay around until something turns up. What time is it?"

"Two o'clock."

"It will be getting light in a couple of hours more, and then I'm sure I'll find out something."

"But yer wot duds? ye'll be catching yer death o' cold."

Dan laughed at the idea.

"I've slept out in the woods in the wet many a time, and I didn't feel it," he replied. "I'm not as tender as all that."

"Will ye go back to the house?"

"Yes. If you want me, fire two shots in quick succession, and I'll do the same."

"All right."

In a few moments more Kerry departed and Dan was left alone.

It was by no means a cheerful situation.

All around was gloomy and damp, and not a sound could be heard.

Finding as comfortable a nook as he could, Dan sat down to think.

Presently his eyes closed and in a second more he was asleep.

How long this sleep lasted he could not tell.

Dan awoke with a start.

"This will never do!" he exclaimed to himself. "I might better have gone back with Kerry. For all I know—"

Dan did not have a chance to finish the thought.

A sudden blow in the back of the neck caused him to stagger forward.

Another, and he fell forward like a log.

"I guess I've finished him," muttered a voice behind him. "Now to get rid of his body!"

And stepping from her hiding-place, Mrs. Starfield dragged Dan's inanimate form to the edge of the lake and shoved it into the water.

CHAPTER XIV.

DAN FINDS LITTLE LUCY.

SPLASH!

Dan's body struck the water, sunk under a foot or more, and then came to the surface.

For an instant the form lay as one dead.

Then the cold water revived it, and he gave a shudder from head to foot.

He was still alive!

An instant later the current carried him under some overhanging bushes.

Mrs. Starfield watched the form out of sight, and then turning, sped into the thicket.

"He's gone for good," she muttered to herself. "It's murder. If they catch me now I'll be hung. I'm worse than Nicholas."

But a few steps away she came to a large overhanging rock.

Behind it, between the bushes, was a small opening.

This she entered.

Inside was a small cavern, scarcely six feet square.

At one time it had been the lair of some wild animal, for the bones of many smaller animals were strewn in all directions.

In one corner sat little Lucy, her hands tied behind her, and a handkerchief fastened around her neck and over her mouth.

The little miss had been crying bitterly.

Her eyes were red and swollen, but the rest of her face was blanched with fear.

Mrs. Starfield advanced and removed the handkerchief.

"Are you ready to keep quiet now?" she asked, severely.

Little Lucy choked down a sob.

"I want to go home to my papa," she replied.

"I don't want to stay here."

"You can't go home now. Maybe you can tomorrow if you are a good girl."

"What will my papa say? He doesn't know where I am."

"Oh, yes, he does. He knows his little girl is safe."

But this statement was such a palpable lie that it was no wonder little Lucy did not believe it.

"Won't papa come for me?" she asked.

"Maybe—if you keep quiet."

But this was not reassuring news, and the little girl began to cry harder than ever.

Mrs. Starfield became enraged.

"Shut up now!" she exclaimed, harshly. "Shut up or I'll kill you!"

More frightened than ever, little Lucy screamed at the top of her lungs.

Her noise seemed to awaken every evil passion in Mrs. Starfield's nature.

At her feet lay the club which had been used so forcibly upon Dan's skull.

She picked up the weapon and gazed at it.

"Nicholas is captured, and I've already killed one person; why not get the other out of the way and finish the job?" she whispered to herself. "I owe it to Nicholas to get the yellow-haired thing out of Fred Shepland's reach, anyway."

And with a tigerish gleam in her eyes, she advanced upon little Lucy.

Meanwhile, what of Dan?

In less than two minutes from the time that he had been shoved into the water, he came to himself.

For an instant a thousand pains seemed to shoot through his head and down his back-bone.

But as he swept under the bushes he realized what had occurred, and grasping the branches overhead he managed by sheer will power to pull himself ashore.

Once on the bank, he sunk down exhausted.

"Crickety! what a crack she gave me!" he mumbled to himself, as he lay back, his head resting against a tree-trunk. "My head spins like a top."

For several moments he did not move a finger.

"But I'm not dead yet," he continued, "and she'll find it out, too, just as soon as I can get my second wind."

How long he would have remained quiet we cannot say, but presently he jumped up as if he had received an electric shock.

"What's that?"

From the distance came a faint scream.

"It's little Lucy!"

The screaming grew louder.

For a second Dan stopped to locate the cries, and then darted forward.

The cavern soon came into view, and so weak that he could hardly stand, the Boy Spy rushed inside.

He was none too soon.

Mrs. Starfield's club was raised over little Lucy's head.

A moment more and the brains of the little miss would have been dashed out.

"Stop!" cried Dan. "Stop or I will fire!"

And pulling out the pistol Kerry had loaned him, he aimed it at the woman's head.

Mrs. Starfield uttered a cry of alarm.

She was taken completely by surprise.

The light was still uncertain, yet Dan's aim seemed to be dangerously true.

"You—you—" faltered the woman, in amazement.

"Yes, me," replied Dan. "I'm not so dead as you thought I was. Drop that club."

Mrs. Starfield made a rush for him.

"I won't!" she cried. "I'm not to be caught by a boy!"

"Stand back, or I'll fire!"

But, enraged beyond reason, the woman rushed upon him.

Taking aim at the upraised arm, Dan pulled the trigger.

Click!

The hammer fell, but there was no report.

The soaking in the water had rendered the weapon useless.

"Hal hal! I have you now!"

With the laugh of a fiend Mrs. Starfield brought down blow after blow upon Dan's head and shoulders.

He was too weak to resist.

He put up his hands feebly to ward off the attack, but the action was useless.

With little Lucy's cries ringing in his ears, he sunk to the ground.

Then all became a blank.

Mrs. Starfield kicked his body with her foot.

"He brought it on himself," she said, to herself. "Wonder if he is shamming?"

Taking her club she prodded Dan in the side and under the ribs.

He made no sign.

"I guess it's genuine," was her comment.

"Now, what will I do with him?"

She looked around and thought for several moments.

Then taking off a heavy apron that she wore, she tore it into strips and bound Dan's hands behind him and fastened them to the root of a tree that sprung from between the rocks.

"That will fix you!" she exclaimed. "Now

if you ever come to, you will have the pleasure of starving to death."

To make her work doubly sure, she also tied Dan's feet fast to the edge of a rock.

"Now we'll leave you to yourself," she said. "Come along with me."

The latter words were addressed to little Lucy, who had watched the proceedings in horror.

"What do you want to treat Mr. Dart that way for?" gasped the little miss.

"Never you mind," snarled Mrs. Starfield. "Come on!"

And yanking little Lucy by the hand she made her way out of the cavern.

Once outside, she paused for a moment in contemplation.

"Wanted to shoot me, eh?" she muttered, savagely. "I'll fix you, just see if I don't!"

Near by was a pile of dead leaves and brushwood.

This she carried over to the cavern entrance and shoved it into the opening.

"What are you going to do with Mr. Dart?" asked little Lucy, puzzled by all the strange actions.

"Little girls mustn't ask questions," was the reply.

"I don't like you to use Mr. Dart so," continued the little miss with spirit.

"Is Mr. Dart a relation of yours?" asked Mrs. Starfield, suddenly pausing in her nefarious work.

"No; he's a friend of papa's."

"Are you sure?"

"Papa said so. But I don't want you to treat him this way, because he's a friend of mine, too."

"Never mind, come on."

And taking the little girl again by the hand, Mrs. Starfield led her quite a ways into the woods.

"Now you stay here and wait for me," she commanded. "Don't you dare move."

Leaving little Lucy, Mrs. Starfield hurried back to the cavern.

Lighting a match she applied it to the brushwood, which blazed up instantly.

"Reckon that'll fix you!" she hissed.

And then she left poor Dan to his fate.

CHAPTER XV.

A CLOSE SHAVE.

DAN lay as one dead.

Battered and bruised from head to foot, it was only his naturally strong constitution that made him rally.

He regained consciousness slowly. The blood trickled from his forehead, and the top of his head was terribly swollen.

He drew several long and painful breaths, and then essayed to rise.

Of course he could not, and it took but a few seconds for him to realize his utterly helpless condition.

"Here's a pretty go," he muttered, disconsolately.

He tugged at the binding upon his hands and feet, but Mrs. Starfield had done her work efficaciously, and the knots held.

"I suppose that woman meant for me to die and rot here," he thought, dismally.

At that instant a tiny flame appeared near the entrance.

"Hello! what's that?"

Dan watched the flame intently.

As it increased in size, he saw by its light the piled-up leaves and brushwood around him.

An instant later a puff of wind drove the flames and sparks into the cavern!

"Merciful heavens!" he ejaculated, "she means to burn me alive!"

The wind continued to drive the flames dangerously near to the helpless Spy-Detective, and the smoke and sparks soon filled the cavern.

Every second it was growing hotter.

The now thoroughly alarmed lad struggled with might and main to free himself of his bonds, but—to no purpose. The woman had done her work only too well.

"My God!" he cried, in agony. "Save me! Help! Help!"

The flames came closer.

He turned his face away so that it might not be blistered.

What was that?

A noise outside.

A moment later the burning brushwood was scattered little by little, as if some feeble hand was at work.

Soon a draught of cool air, that Dan thought the sweetest he had ever felt, rushed in despite the smoke that now filled the cavern.

"Help! Help!" he called out.

A moment more and a little girl peered through the smoke into Dan's white face.

It was little Lucy's face and form the amazed Boy Spy-Detective beheld.

"Is that you, Miss Lucy?" he gasped.

"Yes, Mister Dart. I want to help you," was the little one's earnest reply.

"Where did you come from?" asked Dan, in wonder.

"I ran away from that bad—bad old woman. Won't you take me back home, Mr. Dart?"

"Indeed I will!" replied Dan, quickly. "Will you untie my hands, little chum?"

"Oh, yes, if I can."

But the tough knots, made tighter than ever by the prisoner's struggles, were too much for the little maid's delicate fingers.

"Here, hold up!" called out Dan. "Just put your hand in that pocket. You'll find a knife."

He indicated the pocket, and little Lucy did as directed.

The knife was drawn, and in a moment the bonds were cut.

Dan sprang to his feet.

"Come out into the open air," he said. "It's too much for me in here."

They emerged from the cavern, and, finding a crevice behind a rock, sat down to rest.

"Where is Mrs. Starfield?" asked Dan, as he busied himself in cutting a large club.

"I don't know. She told me to wait for her, and I ran away and came to you."

"You saved my life."

"Did I? I'm awfully glad. You're going to take me back to my papa, aren't you?"

"Yes, Miss Lucy, just as quick as I can. You know your papa is a long ways from here."

"I know it. We have to ride in the cars, don't we, Mr. Dart?"

"Yes, all day and all night. But, please don't call me Mr. Dart. I ain't used to it. Call me Dan."

"All right, Mr. Dan."

Mr. Dan was as bad as Mr. Dart, but the young detective made no further protest.

The brief conversation had given Dan a chance to recover somewhat, both mentally and physically, and thinking over all that was seemingly best to do, concluded that it would be safest to return to the cottage at once.

"The sergeant will be wondering what has become of me," he thought. "I hope he and his man will wait until I get back."

Dan was as tired as could be, and as for little Lucy, it was only the unusual excitement that kept her awake.

As we have said, the Boy-Spy had spent many nights in the woods, so the darkness did not bother him.

Guided by the stars he led the way back slowly, being careful that he should get into no more quagmires.

Little Lucy walked slower, and slower until, worn out as he was, Dan took her up in his arms and carried her.

His wounded shoulder pained almost beyond endurance, but he set his teeth hard and uttered no complaint.

At length the cottage appeared in sight. About it all was dark and silent.

Dan uttered a cry of dismay.

"They're gone, sure enough!" he exclaimed, dismally.

Upon the door a bit of paper was fastened.

Lighting a match Dan read it:

"We have taken Starfield to Kenasaw. Stay here until we return."

Dan looked at the paper closely. The handwriting was a peculiar one; he was sure he had seen it before.

Had he seen it on the blotter at the police-station?

No; it was not like any handwriting there.

Where, then, had he seen it?

Suddenly an idea flashed across his mind. The same hand that had written this notice had penned the letter he had found at the hotel in Kenasaw!

"It is Starfield's work!" he exclaimed in bewilderment. "What does it all mean?"

Pushing open the door of the cottage, he entered.

A candle stood upon the table, and in a second Dan had it lit.

Everything was in confusion. The cot and two chairs lay in a wreck upon the floor, while on the white pillow were several drops of blood!

There had certainly been a fight, but who had come out best Dan could not tell.

He was sure that the notice upon the door was

a blind; and, that being so, what had become of Starfield and the officers?

Faint from exhaustion, he sat down upon the only whole chair in the place.

Little Lucy had not noticed the condition of affairs, for, safe in Dan's arms, she had gone fast asleep.

He laid her down tenderly.

"Let her sleep," he thought. "She needs it."

Just at that moment Dan felt almost too weak to plan any future course of action.

"If I only had a drink of water," he murmured; "it would freshen me up a bit."

But a glance around showed nothing drinkable in the place.

Then he remembered that when they had first come to the cottage by the path from the shore they had passed a spring.

"I'll get some of that. A drink and a wash will brace me up as much as anything."

In the corner stood a pail, and, taking it up, he passed out of the cottage, leaving little Lucy fast asleep near the inner door.

It was now growing lighter, and Dan judged that it must be between four and five o'clock.

He kept his eyes and ears on the alert, resolved to be surprised no more if such a thing could be avoided.

"I'm almost a case now," he thought, as he drew a long, painful breath. "A few more such cracks as that woman gave me, and I'll pass in my checks."

Using his club as a cane, he moved slowly forward.

As he neared the spring, several dark-red patches upon the path attracted his attention. More blood!

Dan shivered. Weak as he was, he drew himself together and grasped his weapon firmly.

As he neared the spring the Boy Spy uttered a cry of horror.

There, the face covered with blood, lay the rigid form of Sergeant Wood!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HUT IN THE WOODS.

"THE MAN IS DEAD!"

This was the thought that flashed over Dan's mind.

Sergeant Wood certainly looked so.

Falling down on his knees, the boy turned the body over and put his ear to the officer's chest.

"No, he isn't dead! He breathes still."

It was true; the man did breathe, faintly.

Overjoyed at this discovery, Dan soon procured water and dashed it into the sergeant's face.

There was a shudder, and then a gasp.

"Where—where—Who are you?" he exclaimed, in a husky whisper. "Don't—don't hit me again!"

"You're all right!" replied Dan, reassuringly. "Keep quiet."

There was water remaining in the pail, and of this Dan drank deeply, and then proceeded to wash both the sergeant's face and his own.

It was full ten minutes before either of the two were able to converse intelligibly.

"How did it happen?" asked Dan, presently.

Sergeant Wood's story was a rather disconnected one, he being in no condition to tell it straight.

As far as Dan could learn, Starfield had attacked the officer immediately after Kerry's departure.

The man had either slipped his handcuffs or opened them, and then sprung upon the officer, hitting him over the head with a lantern and then using one of the chairs.

It had been a fierce fight, in which Sergeant Wood had for some time bravely held his own; but by an accident he had slipped to the floor, and then all became a blank.

When he came to, he was outside in a clump of bushes.

Remembering the spring, he had tried to crawl to the spot, but, before he could reach it, had fainted.

"And you know the rest," he concluded.

"Where are the woman and the little girl?"

"The little girl is safe," replied Dan, and he related his portion of the night's adventures.

"I wish we had Starfield and his mother safely bagged," he added. "Have you any idea where the villain has gone to?"

"Taken one of the boats and left the island, I suppose," returned the sergeant. "There wouldn't be any advantage in his staying here. He'd be caught sooner or later."

"But his mother?"

The officer scratched his head.

"I didn't think of the old witch! Wonder where she is now?"

"Looking for the little girl, I suppose," replied Dan. "Come, let's get back to the cottage. I hate to have the little one out of my sight."

Both slowly arose and made their way back to the abode.

As they did so Dan fancied he heard a noise in the bushes to the left.

He halted at once.

"Who goes there?" he demanded, while the sergeant drew his pistol.

"Och, but it's only me, so it is!" exclaimed a voice in unmistakable Irish accents, and an instant later Kerry stepped into the opening.

"Ye got back afore Oi did!" he continued to Dan. "Bad 'cess to the bushes and the rocks and the darkness!"

Ever since he had left his boy pard on the lake shore, Kerry had been wandering around trying to find the cottage.

He lamented loudly at the disastrous turn affairs had taken.

"Oid loike to see that woman and her son both dance a jig on nothing at all, so I would," was his strongly-expressed wish.

"Never mind, we have the little girl, and that's one consolation," replied Dan.

He was the first to enter the cottage and the others quickly followed.

The candle upon the table had burnt itself out, but the early morning light was beginning to creep into the eastern window.

Dan's eyes at once sought the corner where he had left little Lucy, fully expecting to see her still there fast asleep.

She was gone!

Startled beyond measure he searched the room hastily, and also entered the front apartment.

The little girl had disappeared completely! Not a trace of her was to be found anywhere.

"She's gone!" he ejaculated.

"Maybe she went to look for you?" suggested Sergeant Wood.

"I hope so," replied Dan. "Heaven grant that she hasn't been carried off again!"

He ran outside and made a hasty tour of the cottage, calling her name.

There was no reply.

Almost distracted, he went inside.

"She must be here, or else very near," exclaimed Dan. "Why, I haven't been gone from the house ten minutes."

"Then you can make sure that the man or his mother has been here since you were gone," replied Sergeant Wood.

"We'll go out and make a hunt, though I'm as weak as a cat, and I know you're not much better," he added.

"I'm worth a dozen cats," declared Dan, drawing himself together. "I mean to find her, if it takes a month."

He drew out the pistol Kerry had loaned him and wiped it off.

"Give me a few dry cartridges," he continued. "I'm going to have no nonsense this time. It's kill or get killed."

There was a determined glitter in the lad's eye as he spoke.

The Irishman handed over the ammunition.

"You had better go down to the boats," Dan went on. "If one of them has been used, fire a shot to let me know. If both are still there, fire two shots, and then put the boats into another hiding-place where the Starfields can't find them. Do you understand?"

"Yis, sor," replied Kerry. "Phat of you, sergeant?" he continued, to his superior.

"I'll go out just as soon as I'm able," replied the officer. "Just let me rest awhile, and I'll go hunting, too."

If the truth must be told, Sergeant Wood was just the least bit of a coward, and the beating Starfield had given him had taken all the bravery out of him.

In a moment Dan and the policeman departed.

Dan hardly knew in what direction to turn, but, bidding Kerry remember the instructions given him, he struck into the woods.

"I'll search every foot of the island before I leave it," he said to himself. "Unless I'm sure Starfield has taken himself off."

It was not long before the sounds of two shots reached his ears.

"That means that both boats are still there. I don't think there are any more boats, and, if that is so, then Starfield, his mother and little Lucy are still on the island. I must find them."

Dan resolved to strike into the interior as far as possible.

Whether it was by intuition or chance it ran

in his mind that this was the path Starfield had taken.

On and on he went.

Presently he struck quite a well-defined path. "Hello!" he exclaimed. "Where does this lead to, I wonder? It can't be that I've got turned around and this is the road to the shore."

A few minutes' walk convinced him that the path was a new one to him.

"I'll follow it to the end," he resolved.

"Paths always lead somewhere, and one direction seems just as good as another to follow."

Suddenly something shiny upon the ground attracted his attention.

Picking up the object he uttered an exclamation.

It was a silver buckle that belonged to a belt little Lucy Shepland had worn around her waist.

"I'm on the right track!" cried Dan. "Now I must be careful. No more failures."

Seeing that his pistol was in proper order for instant use, he hurried cautiously forward.

The road was a wild one, and choked in many places.

Dan had all he could do to keep the brambles from scratching his eyes, and the loose rocks from twisting his feet and ankles out of shape.

At length a turn in the road brought him to a small clearing.

On the other side arose a small wall of stone, moss-covered and crumbling.

At the foot of the rocks a rude hut was built. It seemed to be very old, and looked as if it might tumble down at any moment.

No one was in sight.

"Guess I won't expose myself just yet," said Dan to himself. "Some one may be in the place."

He had hardly finished before the door of the hut swung open and Starfield came out.

He looked none the worse for his encounter with Sergeant Wood, but his whole appearance indicated that he was in a decidedly bad humor.

"Come out here!" he called out sharply.

An instant later little Lucy came from the hut, weeping as if her heart would break.

CHAPTER XVII.

A BITTER FIGHT.

DAN was delighted to see little Lucy Shepland once more.

Though the little maid was sobbing bitterly, he saw with great satisfaction that she was unharmed.

At once he drew his pistol, for he meant to be the little one's rescuer, even at the risk of his life.

"Stop your noise, do you hear?" exclaimed Starfield, to the little girl. "Do you suppose I'm going to stand your infernal racket all the time?"

"Oh, Mr. Starfield, please, please let me go back!" cried the frightened girl.

"You can't go back! Now shut up!" he rebuked, in a peremptory tone.

"You said I could, Mr. Starfield," she entreated, pitifully.

"Well, I've changed my mind," growled the abductor.

To state the truth, the little girl strongly resembled her who had been her mother, and for that reason Starfield hated her.

"Won't you let Mr. Dan take me?" continued his captive.

"Mr. Dan? Who's he?"

"Mr. Dan Dart."

"Oh! No, I guess not—in fact, I'm sure not," Starfield added to himself.

And he smiled grimly.

"That cursed boy shall never get her in his hands again," he muttered. "I'll kill her first!"

Starfield was perplexed.

He knew not which way to turn or what to do.

Besides, he was not a little worried about the whereabouts of his mother.

For aught he knew she might be dead, either at Dan's hands or at those of the two minions of the law.

It was by the merest chance that he had caught sight of the Boy Spy-Detective, followed him back to the cottage, and then made off with little Lucy.

He had heard the two shots fired by Kerry, and they had bothered him not a little.

"The amount of it is that this place is getting too hot for me," was his conclusion. "It won't be many hours before the entire Kenasaw police will come down here to look for me. I'll have to hunt up mother and then find some way of leaving the island."

It was now broad daylight and, walking well out into the clearing, Starfield cast a sharp glance in all directions.

But Dan kept well out of sight behind a clump of trees.

Little Lucy meanwhile remained silent for a few minutes, and then, overcome by the terrors of her situation, burst out crying anew.

Her tears seemed to madden Starfield beyond endurance.

He did not say a word, but going up to her, he boxed her ears roughly.

"I'll teach you to disobey me!" he exclaimed, in a passion.

And then he raised his hands to repeat the blows.

"Stop that!"

The words were spoken in cold, clear tones.

Starfield jumped around as if electrified.

Then he grew pale, and his knees trembled in spite of himself.

Before him stood Dan, his teeth set, and a look of absolute determination showing itself upon every line of his face.

In his right hand the Boy Spy held his pistol, and at this instant the weapon was aimed directly at Starfield's head.

"You!" cried the abductor, taking a step forward.

"Stop where you are!" commanded Dan. "Don't you dare stir, or by that rising sun over yonder, I'll kill you!"

Starfield stopped short.

To be thwarted by a boy was galling, but the fixed look in Dan's eyes compelled him to obey.

"What do you want?" he asked, doggedly, but the Boy Spy did not deign to answer the question.

He was interested in little Lucy, who had at first uttered a scream at his sudden appearance, but now rushed forward and clung fast to his left hand.

"Think you're smart, don't you?" sneered Starfield, hardly knowing what to say.

"I don't think so," replied Dan; "I know it. Throw up your hands!" he continued, sharply.

For Starfield had made a movement in the direction of his hip pocket.

"Try that again," continued the Boy Spy, "and I'll give you a dose of cold lead at once."

Starfield shivered.

Naturally he was no coward, but Dan's manner overawed him.

"Miss Lucy," he continued.

"Yes, Mr. Dan."

"Listen to me. Do you see this pistol in my hand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, just go and see if there isn't one like it in that man's pocket."

"Oh, Mr. Dan!"

"Don't be afraid—he won't hurt you."

"Don't come near me!" roared Starfield. "I'll break her neck!"

"You won't lay a finger on her," returned Dan, calmly.

Somewhat timidly little Lucy did as she had been directed.

Starfield trembled with rage, but, as the Boy Spy had predicted, he offered no resistance.

The little miss's search was rewarded by finding two pistols, both in prime condition.

Dan transferred them to his pocket.

"You shall pay for this!" hissed Starfield, bitterly.

"Maybe—I'll take my chances," replied the young detective coolly.

"What are you going to do with me?" asked Starfield.

Dan made no immediate reply.

In truth, he was considerably bothered by the situation.

He did not wish to leave Starfield behind, and yet, to make him march along and at the same time take care of little Lucy Dan realized was a difficult and hazardous undertaking.

"You'll have to go along with me," he said, finally. "And mind you, no underhand work. I won't stand any fooling."

Starfield made no answer.

He was watching Dan as a cat watches a mouse.

But, all ordinary circumstances considered, the Boy Spy was ready for him.

But just here an unfortunate thing occurred.

Little Lucy, all unconscious of what she was doing, placed herself directly between the two.

In an instant Starfield snatched her up and flung her directly into Dan's face.

Of course, to keep her from being injured, our

hero was compelled to catch the little miss and set her on the ground.

In doing this he was forced to lower his pistol.

This was the single chance for which Starfield had been watching.

With a savage cry he pounced upon Dan and bore him to the ground.

And then began a fearful struggle—a struggle for life and death.

Over and over the two rolled—first one on top and then the other.

"It's kill or be killed, I suppose," thought Dan.

He gathered all his remaining strength to gain the supremacy.

In his hand he still held the pistol and this he endeavored to use.

Starfield saw the action and tried to turn the muzzle to one side.

In the tumbling about the two pistols Dan had put into his pocket dropped out.

But neither of the two men saw them.

Little Lucy ran about crying.

She wished to help Dan but did not know how to go at it.

Presently, inch by inch Dan got his pistol pointed at the other's breast.

"Now surrender," he gasped. "Or I'll fire."

Starfield relaxed his grasp.

But just then a noise behind him prompted Dan to look around.

His face fell.

And well it might, for behind him stood Mrs. Starfield.

She had picked up her son's two pistols, and now had both pointed at Dan's head.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TWO TO ONE.

DAN was greatly surprised at the sudden interruption, and for an instant was tempted to relinquish his advantage over Starfield.

But instinct told him that such a course might prove fatal to his chances of success.

"Let my son up!" cried Mrs. Starfield, shrilly.

Dan never budged.

"Do you hear?" continued the woman. "Let him up or I will shoot."

"Stand back!" Dan replied, determinedly.

"Another step and I'll lay your son dead at your feet."

Mrs. Starfield saw the boy's shining weapon; saw, too, the fire in his eye, and stepped back a pace.

"Shoot him, mother!" roared Starfield, in a rage. "Shoot him! Never mind me!"

"Do it at your peril!" added Dan.

Mrs. Starfield again raised one of the pistols. "Let my son get up, or I'll fire!" she repeated.

By the tone of her voice Dan saw that this time she meant it.

With a sudden movement he threw Starfield's body on top of his own.

Meanwhile little Lucy, seeing the danger that was threatened, ran to Mrs. Starfield and caught hold of the arm that held the pistol.

Crack!

The weapon went off just as the little miss had destroyed its aim.

The bullet grazed Dan's arm and buried itself in Starfield's shoulder.

The man uttered a groan.

"You've killed your son!" exclaimed the Boy Spy-Detective.

White with fear, Mrs. Starfield dropped her weapons and rushed forward.

This was Dan's chance.

He jumped to his feet, and before the woman could realize his actions, had secured the weapons, and was pointing one of them and his own at her and Nicholas Starfield.

"My son! my son! are you dead?" cried the woman, falling upon the man.

But Starfield was not dead.

Indeed, he was not even badly hurt.

He threw off his mother and sprung up.

"It's only a flesh-wound," he answered. "Curse the boy, we'll soon—"

He stopped short.

Crack!

Dan had pulled the trigger of one of the pistols, and the bullet had just grazed the man's leg.

"Stop where you are!" cried the Boy Spy, excitedly. "My blood's up now, and I'm not to be riled!"

Starfield took another step toward him.

Crack!

This time the bullet buried itself in the man's leg.

He gave a howl of pain, and sunk to the ground.

"You've got to mind!" said Dan, grimly. "Heretofore I've been easy with you both, but that's ended now, and both of you have either got to give in or give up your lives. You can take your choice."

Starfield gave a groan.

"You have done me up," he muttered. "I'll be lame for life."

"If so, it is your own fault. Mrs. Starfield, keep back."

For the woman had made as if to spring upon him.

The woman's eyes flashed wickedly, but she obeyed the injunction, and turned her attention to her son.

The loss of blood had made Starfield faint.

"Will you let me get some water?" asked the mother, turning to Dan.

"Where will you get it?"

"There is a spring behind the rocks."

"What will you get it in?"

"There is a tin can at the spring, I think."

Dan hesitated.

"Well, go," he replied. "But remember, the least fooling, and your life shall pay the forfeit."

In an instant the woman had disappeared.

While she was gone Dan deliberated upon what to do next.

It did not take him long to decide upon his course of action.

He knew Starfield was too badly hurt to move very far from where he now lay, and he was sure that the motherly instincts of even such a woman as Mrs. Starfield would not permit her to abandon her son to his fate while he was thus suffering.

"I'll get little Lucy safe, and then attend to these two later," was Dan's conclusion.

"Come, we will go," he said to the little girl. And taking her by the hand he hurried her away as fast as possible.

Dan was getting familiar with the island now, and it took him but a short while to reach the cottage.

No one was in sight.

He fired off his pistol.

The effect of the shot was to bring out Sergeant Wood, who had been taking it easy on the cot inside.

"Aha!" exclaimed the officer. "So you've found the little girl."

"Yes. Where is Kerry?"

"I don't know. Down to the boats I suppose. I felt so bad I had to lay down again. Where are the two abductors?"

"The man is shot and the woman is taking care of him."

"Suot, eh?" Sergeant Wood felt braver at once. "I'll go and arrest them without delay."

"But you don't know the way," said Dan.

While they were speaking Kerry came hurrying up.

"Oh, heard the shots, and thought Oi'd like a hand in if there was a fight," he explained.

He was quickly given to understand the situation.

"Now, sergeant, will you take care of the little girl?" asked Dan. "If you will I'll take Kerry along and go arrest the two."

"But I think I ought to go," said Sergeant Wood, with an important shake of his head.

"As an officer—"

"But Starfield is a desperate man," returned Dan, who could read the sergeant like an open book, and knew that the officer was only looking for glory when there was no danger attached.

"Oh, well, if you insist—"

"But will you take good care of the girl while I am gone?"

"Certainly."

"Miss Lucy, will you stay here till I come back?"

"If you want me to, Mr. Dan."

"I won't be gone long. Come, Kerry."

"Yes, sir."

In a moment the two were off.

On the way Dan related to the policeman what had occurred, and what might be expected.

They soon reached the clearing opposite the rocks.

No one was to be seen.

For a moment Dan was stunned by the discovery.

Then he rushed over to the hut and kicked open the door.

It was somewhat dark inside.

But by the dim light he saw Starfield lying upon a couch with his mother beside him.

"Here they are," said Dan to Kerry. "I

don't think the man in his present condition can do much harm, but you better be careful."

"I won't give him any chance," replied the Irishman.

And taking out a pair of handcuffs he fastened them around Starfield's wrists.

"Now, your turn, me leddy," he continued to Mrs. Starfield.

The woman submitted without a murmur. She knew that it would be useless to attempt resistance, and, besides, the wounding of her son had taken all the fight out of her.

"Where am I to go?" she asked of Dan.

"To the Kenasaw Jail," was our hero's reply.

"The jail! And what are you going to do with my son?"

"Leave him here for the present, until we get ready to remove him."

"Leave him alone?"

"No, sick as he is, I won't trust him alone," replied Dan. "Kerry, you will stay here till I return."

"Yis, sor."

"You must accompany me at once," Dan went on to Mrs. Starfield. "I will take you to Kenasaw and then return at once with a doctor."

"Do—save my son and I don't care what becomes of me," replied the woman, eagerly.

Dan looked at her half-kindly.

"You are not so bad after all," he declared. "I believe if it wasn't for your son you might be a pretty good woman."

Mrs. Starfield was silent.

But, nevertheless, she heaved a sigh, for the shot had struck home.

It did not take long for Dan to reach the cottage.

He found little Lucy safe in Sergeant Wood's charge, and together the four made their way to where Kerry had hidden the boats.

The return to Kenasaw was rather a silent one.

Once again Mrs. Starfield asked Dan if he was a relative of the Sheplands, and seemed surprised at the negative answer.

"It must be," she murmured to herself. "It cannot be otherwise."

On returning to the city, Sergeant Wood took charge of the woman while Dan proceeded with little Lucy to the hotel.

On the way he stopped at a telegraph-office and sent this message to Mr. Shepland:

"Your little child is found. Come immediately. All is well."

At the Eagle House Dan explained matters to the proprietor. Of course the man was greatly surprised at the situation, and he thought the Boy Spy quite a lion.

The matron soon put little Lucy at ease, and, after both the little girl and Dan had had a good wash, they sat down to a warm and hearty breakfast.

It will be needless to relate the particulars of the removal of Starfield to Kenasaw. The abductor's wounds were not severe ones, but yet they were sufficient to keep him from offering any resistance or planning any mode of escape.

Dan saw both him and Mrs. Starfield safe in jail, and then returned to the hotel to await Mr. Shepland's arrival.

He was proud of the victory he had won, which he was sure would be well rewarded.

Yet, never for a moment did he dream of the startling disclosure that the near future held in store for him.

CHAPTER XIX.

A STARTLING CONFESSION.

To tell the truth, Dan passed a restless day and a wakeful night waiting for Mr. Shepland.

His shoulder pained him not a little, and the doctor to whom he went advised him to keep quiet for several days at the very least.

Little Lucy occupied a room adjoining his own, and during the night her preserver was ever on the alert to see that she was not disturbed or was not frightened by her strange situation.

Dan arose at six o'clock, and, after washing and dressing, descended to the office.

As he entered, a gentleman rushed up and grasped him warmly by the hand.

It was Mr. Shepland!

"You didn't lose any time," said Dan, after the greeting was over.

"No, I took the train an hour after I received your telegram," replied the importer.

"Where is Lucy?"

"Up-stairs. Come, I'll take you up."

Dan led the way, and the happy father followed.

At No. 44 they stopped, and the Boy Spy knocked.

"Who's there?" asked a childish voice.

"It is I—Dan. Your papa is here."

"Oh!"

There was a hasty scramble within. Then the key turned in the lock, the door opened, and Dan caught sight of a little figure in white that sprang straight into the parent's outstretched arms.

"When you want me you'll find me in the parlor," remarked Dan, with a blush.

And he left them to enjoy alone a happy meeting that he would not have interrupted for the world.

Yet as he went down-stairs a curious lump arose in his throat.

"It's nice to have a father or some sort of a relation," he sighed to himself.

Any scene like the one above made Dan feel bitterly lonely.

Half an hour later father and daughter came down together.

Little Lucy rushed up to Dan and gave him such a hearty kiss as made him blush as he never had before, and for an instant he wished he was tramping the Grayville woods instead of standing in a public parlor.

During breakfast Dan told Mr. Shepland the particulars of all that had occurred.

"You have indeed done well," declared the importer, when the boy had finished. "Up to last night I had three detectives on the case, but none of them gained a clew worth following. The evening mail two days ago brought Starfield's demand for money, and had I not heard from you I would most likely have acceded to his demands. Depend upon it, you shall lose nothing for the pluck and bravery you have shown."

Immediately after breakfast Mr. Shepland and Dan walked down to the police station, where they found Sergeant Wood expecting them.

"Well, what of the prisoners?" asked the importer. "How do they take their arrest?"

"The man is sullen and says little," replied the sergeant. "The woman has broken down and cries nearly all the time."

"And Starfield's wounds?"

"The surgeon says they are trifling. He must keep quiet, that is all."

"Can we see them?"

"Certainly. Which one first?"

"Starfield."

The sergeant led the way down a gloomy stone corridor. On either side were cells, and stopping before one of these, he unlocked the door and allowed them to enter.

At first Mr. Shepland and Dan could see but little. As, however, their eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness they beheld the abductor of little Lucy lying upon a bench, in the corner.

"Starfield!" said the importer, in a sharp voice.

The man jumped to his feet.

"You here?" he exclaimed. "What do you want?"

"Nothing, Starfield," returned Mr. Shepland. "But I'm sorry you are not a better man."

"Did you come all the way from New York to tell me that?" sneered the culprit.

"No; I came for my little girl."

"I suppose she's safe in your hands again?"

"She is—thanks to this young man here."

Starfield grated his teeth.

"I suppose you're going to push my case just as hard as you can."

"Have you a right to expect anything else?"

"No—only—"

"Only what?"

"You'll lose by it."

"That's an idle threat."

"You only think so. Never mind; only if you do come to the conclusion to step back a little when I'm brought up, let me know and I may tell you something that will benefit you," and without another word the crafty plotter laid down again and turned his face to the wall.

"Dan, you're pretty smart," said Mr. Shepland, when they were again out in the corridor; "do you think there is anything in what he says?"

"No, I don't!" asserted Dan. "It's only a plan to escape his just punishment."

But for once the sharp lad was mistaken.

Sergeant Wood led them to another section of the ward, where the female prisoners were kept.

Mrs. Starfield was found in her cell, seated on the edge of a narrow bed. Her brown and gray hair hung loose over her shoulders, and her eyes were red from weeping.

"Mrs. Starfield," began Mr. Shepland, kindly.

The woman gave the importer and Dan one look, and then buried her face in her hands.

"It's fifteen years since we met," continued Mr. Shepland. "I'm sorry to find that in that time you have taken no step toward a better life."

"Mr. Shepland," cried the woman, "don't speak to me in that way! I can't bear it! I know I've done wrong! And poor Nicholas is hurt, too!"

"Not very much," put in Dan, who could not help but pity the miserable woman.

"No? Oh, I'm so glad! What—what is to be done to him?"

"He must suffer the full penalty of the law," replied Mr. Shepland. "But as for you—"

"Never mind me. Won't you be easy on Nicholas?"

The importer shook his head.

"He has done me too much injury," he replied. "Who was it who stole my first-born—my baby boy?"

"I know; but—"

"Oh, I know you would say—'Was the boy not returned?' True, but so pinched and sickly that he could not live."

"And you won't spare Nicholas?" cried the woman.

"How can I? Every summer I go to Greenwood many times—for my wife lies there—and on each visit I stand and contemplate the little mound that marks the resting-place of my only boy!" and Mr. Shepland's breast heaved with emotion as he spoke.

"Oh, spare my son!" again besought the wretched woman.

"You ask too much."

"Then you shall know the truth!" and Mrs. Starfield's eyes glowed with a feverish fire. "Go and weep at that little mound and decorate it with flowers! My daughter's child, not yours, lies there!"

Mr. Shepland grew pale as death.

"What do you mean?" he gasped.

"Hal ha! I'll have revenge! So you won't take pity on my son? Then I'm glad I took no pity on yours!"

"Woman, you are growing mad!"

"Mad? Well, maybe I am. Is it not enough to drive one mad? You robbed my son of his sweetheart—"

"I did not rob him. We both loved the same woman, and I was the one chosen. There was no underhand work on my part, though your son tried hard to place me in a false position."

"It's a lie!" Mrs. Starfield, now, was white with rage. "But, revenge is sweet!"

"And my son—my baby boy?"

"Hal ha! Know the truth and shrink in horror! A week after it was stolen it was left to die in the snow and among the wolves that overrun the Grayville mountains!"

Dan was so astonished he could hardly contain himself.

CHAPTER XX.

GOOD-BY TO THE FOUNDLING.

WAS he dreaming, or had he really heard those words?

This was the thought that ran through the boy's brain like wildfire.

"You say you left that boy-baby among the Grayville mountains?" he gasped.

The woman turned to him with a startled air.

"I—I—"

"And in the winter time?" continued the foundling, pale with excitement.

"Dan, what—what—" began Mr. Shepland, in a strangely unnatural voice.

"Mr. Shepland, I was found in the Grayville mountains one cold winter's day, as I told you, by old Father Masson, who took me in and cared for me."

"Then you must—you must be my own boy!"

What was the matter with Dan? The very world appeared to be going round and round. He seemed to be standing on air. The light of a joy ineffable filled his being.

"Father!"

It was only a single word, but to Dan how sweet—how life-giving!

"Thank God!" exclaimed Mr. Shepland, fervidly, and, as the two embraced, Dan whispered a strong "God be thanked!"

Mrs. Starfield was dumfounded. She had planned to inflict pain, and the result was exactly the contrary.

"How came you to change the children?" demanded Mr. Shepland, after a few minutes of speechless happiness at the discovery and restoration.

"I'll not tell you," was Mrs. Starfield's sharp and sullen reply.

"You shall!" returned Mr. Shepland. "Or I will make you suffer all that the law permits, and that is State's Prison."

"I won't! Leave me!" she retorted, with vicious decision.

"Mrs. Starfield, we have you and your son in our power," put in Dan. "When you placed that boy-baby in the snow to die, you committed a crime against me! Now, unless you explain all the circumstances, I assure you that I'll push the case against you to its utmost—run you to State's Prison, just as sure as you live."

But, the woman remained obdurate, and finally refused to talk at all.

Nevertheless, upon the following day, when her excitement had subsided and she saw a probable term of long imprisonment staring her in the face, she made a full confession.

Three weeks before the abduction of Dan, her own daughter, a young widow, had become the mother of a boy.

The daughter died, and the boy, a sickly infant, was left upon Mrs. Starfield's hands.

When Dan was stolen, Nicholas Starfield conceived the idea of changing the babies, and to this his mother consented, thinking thereby to further her own interests by some day having a rich nephew, whose parentage she would fully prove when the time was opportune.

After the change was made, Nicholas Starfield thought he was being tracked, and to evade the officers of the law took himself and mother away from the city by rail, and then, at a country town, hiring a sleigh, he drove over the mountain-roads to Grayville and beyond.

It was on this memorable ride that Nicholas Starfield had got rid of his awkward burden by pitching the bundle that contained baby Dan into the snow on the side of the road.

How the child was found and cared for by old Father Masson the reader knows.

The ride back to the hotel was a triumphal one for Dan. How new and strange everything appeared! He was not himself at all. There was no such fellow as Dan Dart. He had found a father, and henceforth would be known as Dan Shepland—perhaps some would even go so far as to call him Daniel Shepland, or put a Mr. before his name, like Miss, no, Sister Lucy had insisted upon doing.

Nor was the case less strange to Mr. Shepland. To put it plainly, he was joyfully bewildered. The tears started in his eyes, and the placid coachman, looking down through the glass, was astonished to discover his two fares in each other's arms!

Of course little Lucy was astonished. She hardly understood what was told her at first, but gradually the truth dawned upon her, and then she went wild with delight, and declared it was just the nicest thing in the world to have Dan for a big brother.

Little remains to be chronicled.

A year has passed.

The Starfields, Carter Brooks, and their companions in crime are all in the State's Prison, serving sentences of various lengths.

Dan is now studying for Columbia College, and that he will graduate with high honors may be safely inferred.

He of course lives with his father and sister in their mansion in East Eighty-third street.

After his course at college he is to travel for a year, and then become an equal partner in the establishment he once saved from robbery.

But, though thus surrounded by all the elegance and luxury money can bring, he often looks back with a sense of pride to the rough and stormy times when he won the nickname of Plucky Dan.

THE END.

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